

# THE NOVELS OF G·A·BIRMINGHAM

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LALAGE'S LOVERS  
SPANISH GOLD  
THE SEARCH PARTY  
THE SIMPKINS PLOT  
THE MAJOR'S NIECE  
PRISCILLA'S SPIES  
THE RED HAND OF ULSTER  
ADVENTURES OF DR.WHITTY  
GENERAL JOHN REGAN  
➔ MINNIE'S BISHOP

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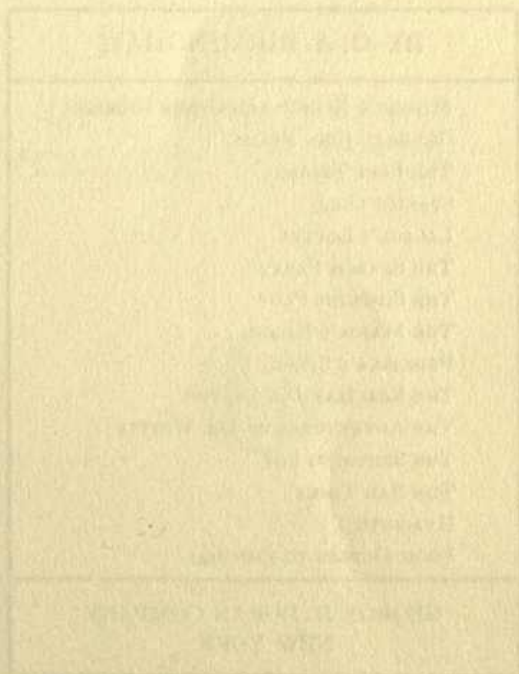
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# MINNIE'S BISHOP



BY G. A. BIRMINGHAM

MINNIE'S BISHOP AND OTHER STORIES

GENERAL JOHN REGAN

THE LOST TRIBES

SPANISH GOLD

LALAGE'S LOVERS

THE SEARCH PARTY

THE SIMPKINS PLOT

THE MAJOR'S NIECE

PRISCILLA'S SPIES

THE RED HAND OF ULSTER

THE ADVENTURES OF DR. WHITTY

THE SEETHING POT

THE BAD TIMES

HYACINTH

FROM DUBLIN TO CHICAGO

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK

# MINNIE'S BISHOP AND OTHER STORIES

BY

G. A. BIRMINGHAM

AUTHOR OF "GENERAL JOHN REGAN," "SPANISH GOLD,"  
"THE LOST TRIBES," "THE SEARCH PARTY," ETC.

*James Owen Hannay*



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**MINNIE'S BISHOP**





# MINNIE'S BISHOP

## I.—MINNIE'S BISHOP

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I

“**R**EALLY, Ronald,” said Ethel Mendel, “your mother is very unreasonable. Just now, too, when we are having such a pleasant time.”

She spoke to her husband, who was arranging a salmon cast in the smoking-room. The post had just arrived and she held an open letter in her hand. He glanced at it apprehensively. His mother was an old lady who made unreasonable demands of her children and usually carried through any scheme in which she was interested without regard for the feelings of other people.

“What is she at now?” he asked.

“She is sending a bishop here,” said Mrs. Mendel. “And he is to stay a week.”

“Good Heavens! We can’t possibly have a bishop here. It—it wouldn’t be decent.”

The Mendels had taken a house in Connemara for the month of August, a house with some good fishing attached to it. Gilbert Hutchinson, a keen angler quite uninterested in bishops, was with them. Minnie, Ronald’s youngest sister, had been admitted to the party as a companion for Mrs. Mendel.

"This is a most unsuitable place for any bishop," said Ronald, "and we are not at all the sort of people——"

Mrs. Mendel drew herself up.

"After all," she said, "we're not doing anything wrong. The apostles fished."

"But they didn't play bridge after dinner."

"We shall have to give up bridge while he's here. Your mother says he won't stay more than a week, and he may go away sooner."

Ronald referred to the letter which his wife handed to him.

"He wants," he said, "to see something of the west of Ireland while he's at home. At home! Where does he come from?"

"India, apparently. If you'd begun at the beginning of your mother's letter instead of the middle you'd have seen that at once."

"Then he's not a proper bishop, at all."

"Oh, yes, he is. He's a missionary bishop, and that's just the same as the ordinary kind, only worse; more severe, I mean."

"Minnie will have to stop smoking cigarettes in the drawing-room," said Ronald.

"Minnie is rather a difficulty. She's just the sort of girl who enjoys shocking people."

"She mustn't do it in my house," said Ronald. "I may not care for having bishops dumped down on me in this way, but while they're here they

must be treated with proper respect. I'll speak to Minnie myself."

"Do. And, Ronald dear, before he comes I think you might lock up that novel you got the other day. I haven't read it, of course, but from what you told me I don't think——"

"There's nothing in the novel half so *risqué* as the things Minnie frequently says. I hope you'll make her understand——"

"I thought you said you'd speak to her."

"I shall, about the smoking. The other warning will come better from you. When does the bishop arrive?"

"He may be here to-morrow," said Mrs. Mendel. "His plans appear to be rather unsettled. He is to drop in on us whenever he finds himself in this neighbourhood. Your mother says we're to have a room ready for him. Be sure to give Mr. Hutchinson a hint not to leave those sporting papers of his lying about. I wouldn't like the bishop to think we read them. They're—well, not very religious, are they, Ronald?"

"If I know anything of Gilbert Hutchinson he'll clear out of this before the bishop arrives. He's not what I call an irreligious man, but I don't think he could stand sitting down to dinner every night with a bishop."

"Mr. Hutchinson acted up to his host's expectation. He recollected suddenly that he had an aunt in County Cork, and that it was his duty to pay her

a visit while he was in Ireland. Minnie, on the other hand, expressed the greatest delight at the prospect of entertaining a bishop.

"There are one or two things I want you to be careful about," Ronald said to her. "When we have a bishop in the house——"

"Don't start lecturing me about the proper way to treat the clergy," said Minnie. "Bessie Langworthy, who is my greatest friend, happens to be married to a canon. I spent last Easter with them and lived for a fortnight in a cathedral close. What I don't know about the habits and tastes of Church dignitaries isn't worth mentioning."

"I suppose he'll want a sitting-room to himself," said Mrs. Mendel. "We shall have to turn your smoking-room into a study, Ronald."

"Sanctum is the proper word," said Minnie. "Bessie Langworthy's husband has a sanctum, not a study."

"I don't see," said Ronald, "how my smoking-room can be turned into a sanctuary without going to enormous expense."

"That remark," said Minnie, "shows how little you know about the clergy. A sanctum is as different as possible from a sanctuary. If you'd ever been inside Bessie Langworthy's husband's sanctum, you'd see the absurdity of what you say."

Mrs. Mendel interposed to save her husband's dignity.

"I hunted about the house this afternoon," she



said, "and found a few books that we might put there for him. They were stacked away in the box-room, but I had them brought down and dusted. There are five volumes by a man called Paley, who seems to have been an archdeacon. I glanced into them and they looked all right. They are theology, aren't they, Ronald?"

"They won't do at all," said Minnie. "Bishops don't read books of that sort. What we want in the sanctum is a few novels of a rather—— You know the sort I mean, Ronald. I see that you have got 'On the Edge of a Precipice.' Now that would be the exact thing."

"Minnie," said Mrs. Mendel, "surely you haven't read that book! Ronald, I told you not to let it out of the smoking-room."

"Of course I've read it," said Minnie. "That's how I know the bishop will like it. Bessie Langworthy's husband, who is a canon——"

"I won't give that book to any bishop," said Ronald.

"I'm not asking you to force it on him," said Minnie. "I simply say that it should be left in the sanctum so that he can get it when he wants it. Bessie Langworthy's husband——"

"Bessie Langworthy's husband be hanged!"

"If you swear while the bishop's here, Ronald," said Minnie, "you'll shock him. I must also have a pound of tobacco for the sanctum; not cigars. Bishops don't smoke cigars. The reason is that it

doesn't do for them to appear opulent, especially nowadays when people are so down on the Church. I'll have a box of my own cigarettes on the chimney-piece in case he doesn't care for a pipe."

"That reminds me," said Ronald, "that I can't have you smoking cigarettes all over the house while he's here."

"My dear Ronald! Don't be perfectly absurd. Bessie Langworthy's husband supplied me with cigarettes while I was there. Church dignitaries like women who smoke. It's a pleasant variety for them. Their own wives never do. By the way, is this bishop married?"

"Is he married?" said Ronald to his wife.

"Your mother doesn't say." She referred to the letter as she spoke. "Anyhow, his wife, if he has a wife, isn't with him."

"That's a comfort," said Minnie. "I could never have got on with a Mrs. Bishop. Now, if you two will excuse me, I'll go and give some instructions to the servants. There are a few things they mightn't be up to if they're not accustomed to bishops."

"I suppose," said Ronald, "that you know exactly how gaiters and aprons ought to be folded."

"Really Minnie," said Mrs. Mendel, "I think you'd better leave the servants to me."

"Certainly not," said Minnie. "You know no more about bishops than they do. You'd simply make a muddle, and what we want is to give the

poor man a really pleasant time while he's with us."

"Ronald," said Mrs. Mendel a few minutes later, "I'm afraid that Minnie——"

Ronald lit a cigar gloomily.

"Your mother," she went on, "won't like the flippant way in which Minnie evidently means to treat the bishop. When she hears about it she'll blame us."

"I rather think," said Ronald, "that I'd better go down to Cork and pay a visit to Gilbert Hutchinson's aunt till this business is over."

"If only Minnie would do that! But of course she won't. She's enjoying herself."

## II

Two days later the bishop arrived. It was half past four o'clock when he drove up to the doors. Ronald was out on the river. Mrs. Mendel and Minnie were in the drawing-room waiting for afternoon tea to be brought to them. The bishop was a young man, as bishops go. He did not look more than forty-five, but his face was lean and heavily lined. He gave Mrs. Mendel the impression of being a man of severe integrity, very little inclined to human weaknesses. She greeted him nervously.

"I expect," said Minnie, cheerfully, "that you'd like to wash your hands before tea."

"Thank you," said the bishop; "I've had a long drive."

Mrs. Mendel wished to ring the bell and summon a servant, but Minnie insisted on showing the bishop to his room. Before leaving him she glanced at his clothes, which were dusty.

"I dare say," she said, "that you'd like the loan of a clothes-brush. Ronald's dressing-room is next door. I'll get you one."

"Thanks," said the bishop, "but I see my bag is here, and I have a clothes-brush of my own."

"I thought," said Minnie, "that being a missionary bishop, you might perhaps——"

"Missionary bishops are poor, of course; but I have managed to save up enough to buy a clothes-brush."

"That's not what I meant. My idea was that, having lived so long among people who wear no clothes, you might have got out of the habit——"

"I assure you," said the bishop, "that our Indian fellow subjects dress most decorously."

"How nice of them! You must tell us all about them later on. Tea will be ready in the drawing-room and I mustn't keep you now. By the way, do you object to China tea?"

"No. I prefer it."

"That's all right. I merely asked because I thought you might consider it your duty to drink nothing but Indian tea with a view to attracting the natives to church."



Mrs. Mendel, who was deeply impressed by the austerity of the bishop's appearance, grasped the opportunity of Minnie's absence. She slipped into the smoking-room, removed "On the Edge of a Precipice," and placed the five volumes of Paley's works in a row on the table. She got back to the drawing-room in time to pour out tea for the bishop. He only drank one cup and took nothing to eat. This distressed Mrs. Mendel. She was accustomed to enjoying a solid meal at five o'clock and she regarded the bishop's abstinence as a kind of asceticism. Minnie talked fluently about golf, a subject which seemed only moderately interesting to the bishop. He said very little, but gazed at Minnie with an expression of some bewilderment. When it became quite clear that he did not mean to drink any more tea, she put down her cup and saucer and stood up.

"The bishop," she said, "would like to see his sanctum at once."

"My sanctum!" he said. "Have I one?"

"Yes," said Minnie, "you have. I arranged it for you myself. It used to be Ronald's smoking-room, but——"

"I mustn't turn Mr. Mendel out of his room," said the bishop. "It's bad enough to come here as an uninvited guest. I don't want to put you all to unnecessary inconvenience."

"It's a pleasure to us," said Minnie. "We know that a bishop can't get on without a sanctum. My

friend Bessie Langworthy's husband has one, and he's only a canon."

The bishop, smiling apologetically, followed her out of the drawing-room.

"Here we are," she said, opening a door for him. "I hope you'll find it comfortable. I dare say now that you'd like to meditate a little over your sermon."

"Do I preach while I'm here?" The bishop asked the question in a tone of surprise.

"No," said Minnie. "Not unless you particularly want to. We shan't ask you to. As a matter of fact, we none of us like sermons. But you will have to preach again some time, I suppose."

"Yes; but not for a few weeks."

"Still, you'll naturally want to meditate over your sermon whenever it has to be preached. You can't meditate too much beforehand. Bessie Langworthy's husband always went to his sanctum after tea to meditate over his sermon."

She paused for an instant and then winked at the bishop. He started violently.

"My own impression is," she added, "that he generally went to sleep."

Her eye lit on the five volumes of Paley as she spoke.

"Dear me," she said, "I thought I had those books cleared away! You don't want them, do you?"

The bishop took the volume containing the "Christian Evidences" and looked at it.

"I read Paley some years ago," he said, "and I don't think I want to read him again."

"Quite right," said Minnie. "I'll get you a different sort of book. There was an excellent one here this morning called, 'On the Edge of a Precipice.' My sister-in-law must have carried it off. I'll fetch it."

"Please don't. If she's reading it——"

"She isn't. Or if she is she ought not to be. It's not at all a proper book."

"Perhaps," said the bishop, "I'd better stick to Paley, after all. The novel may be exciting."

"It is, very."

"Then it might disturb my meditation, and I was up early this morning."

"Don't say another word," said Minnie. "You're perfectly right. Dinner is at eight. If I find that you haven't heard the dressing-gong, I'll come and knock you up myself."

She left the room, but came back again a few minutes later. The bishop, with a volume of Paley on his knee, was stretched in a deep chair.

"Excuse me," said Minnie. "I left a box of cigarettes here. Why didn't you take one?"

"Thank you," said the bishop, "but I don't smoke."

Minnie took a cigarette from the box and lit it.

"Ronald thinks," she said, "that you'll be

shocked at my smoking; but I told him you wouldn't mind. Bessie Langworthy's husband keeps a special box of cigarettes for me when I am with them."

"I should rather like to meet Canon Langworthy," said the bishop. "He seems to be quite a remarkable man."

"He's a dear," said Minnie. "You're sure you don't mind my smoking?"

"There is a prejudice against ladies adopting the habit," said the bishop.

"So silly, isn't it? It's not really wrong, you know, not like marrying your deceased sister's husband."

"That," said the bishop, "is distinctly forbidden in the Prayer-book."

"Quite so," said Minnie, "and even if it wasn't, I shouldn't dream of doing it. I don't see how any self-respecting girl could put up with a second-hand husband. When I marry—— But I really mustn't disturb you any more. Your sermon will be on your mind."

The bishop thought, but was not quite certain, that she winked again, as she left the room.

Dinner, that night, began badly, because Ronald insisted on trying to talk about a recent Church congress in which the bishop had taken a leading part. He was aware that there had been a prolonged discussion about the Athanasian Creed, and he tried to discover, by a series of caution ques-



tions, the bishop's opinion about the public recitation of that formula. But the bishop answered very vaguely, and did not appear to be much interested in the Athanasian Creed. He had, he thought, intercepted with his foot a kick which Minnie meant to reach her sister-in-law. It seemed to him that she was trying to call Mrs. Mendel's attention to the fact that there was something humorous about the discussion which Ronald had started. The idea of finding a latent joke in the Athanasian Creed was new to the bishop. He felt embarrassed and was afraid to commit himself to any remark, lest he should, unconsciously, contribute to the merriment in Minnie's eyes. Before the fish-plates were taken away Ronald's effort collapsed. He looked piteously at his wife, mutely urging her to start a fresh and more congenial topic. It was Minnie who came to the rescue of the party. She asked the bishop whether he knew how to crack the joint of his nose. He set down his wineglass abruptly and looked hard at her. Then he said that he did not believe that either his or any other nose had a joint. Ronald, frowning severely, said that the idea of cracking a nose was absurd. Minnie maintained that the thing could be done. By way of proving that she spoke the truth she seized her own nose, pulled it slowly down, gave it a sudden twist toward her left cheek, and produced a sharp click. The bishop appeared surprised, and asked her to be good enough to do it again. Ronald muttered something

about monkey tricks. Minnie repeated her performance and this time the click sounded louder than before. Foreseeing that conversation with the bishop might be difficult, she had come down to dinner with a small watch in her hand. By snapping the case at the proper moment she secured an excellent effect. The bishop, greatly to the amusement of the servants, tried his own nose. Ronald, looking angrily at his sister, explained the trick.

"I thought," said Minnie, "that you'd like to know how to do it. With a little practice you'll be able to take in anybody. These little arts are so useful abroad, aren't they? I'm sure you'd find a thing like that most attractive to the heathen."

The bishop laughed suddenly. It may have been the idea of teaching high-caste Hindus to crack their noses that moved him. It may have been the way in which Minnie smiled at him. He seemed, for the rest of the evening, to prefer her conversation to Ronald's efforts to get back to the more orthodox subject of the Athanasian Creed.

### III

It was that pleasant hour of the day between afternoon tea and the sounding of the gong which gives warning of the approach of dinner-time. Ronald Mendel and his wife sat on the gravel sweep in front of the house.

"Tomorrow," he said, with a sigh of satisfaction, "that bishop goes."

"I think," said Mrs. Mendel, "that he has enjoyed his visit. Your mother is greatly pleased. I had a letter from her this morning in which she said that she'd heard from him and——"

"Nothing could be more outrageous than Minnie's behaviour from start to finish. I've never for a moment felt safe. I've sat, so to speak, on the edge of a volcano."

"She took him off our hands," said Mrs. Mendel. "Be a little grateful, Ronald."

"She ought to be whipped."

"Ronald dear!"

"Well, she ought. Fortunately, I don't believe he understood half she said. Besides, I don't approve of dragging bishops into dangerous places. He came in wet to the waist the day she took him up the river in the punt. She must have upset him."

"He didn't seem to mind."

"No, but I did. I may not be much of a man for going to church, but I think bishops ought to be treated with some respect."

"Still," said Mrs. Mendel, "your mother seems greatly pleased."

"She won't be when she sees him. I don't know how Minnie managed it, but his face is all scratched."

"That happened when she took him out to gather

blackberries. It doesn't seem to have been her fault. He said he slipped and rolled down a bank."

"Bishops ought not to be taken near banks of that sort," said Ronald. "And yesterday I found him reading 'On the Edge of a Precipice.' If he tells my mother that he got that book in my house I shall never hear the end of it."

"He won't tell her. He has too much sense."

"He has very little sense—less sense than any bishop I ever heard of. Good Lord! Look at him now!"

The bishop and Minnie emerged from the shrubbery at the far end of the lawn. Their appearance justified an exclamation. Minnie had grasped the bishop's wrists and was towing him towards the house. He was hanging back; but every now and then Minnie, exerting herself her full strength, succeeded in breaking into a trot. The bishop appeared to be a good deal embarrassed. Ronald took his pipe out of his mouth and laid it on the ground beside him.

"Congratulate me at once," said Minnie, breathlessly, "both of you, without an instant's delay. The bishop and I are engaged to be married."

"If this is any kind of a joke," said Ronald, "it strikes me as being in remarkably bad taste."

"It's not a joke," said Minnie. "It's quite true. Isn't it, Harold? Didn't you say your name was Harold?"



"Harold Cyril," said the bishop.

"I shall probably call you Hal after we are married," said Minnie.

"No bishop," said Ronald, "would marry a girl like you, Minnie."

"I assure you," said the bishop, "that if Miss Mendel—I mean to say—Minnie—can only bring herself to—— You know I'm only a missionary bishop."

"That's just it," said Minnie. "You don't understand in the least, Ronald. What the bishop says is that I'll be a help to him in his work. You said that, didn't you, Harold?"

"Yes," said the bishop, bravely.

"You'd be a help!" said Ronald. "Oh, hang it all, Minnie, that's a bit too thick!"

"Not at all," said Minnie. "My manners and general gaiety of disposition are just what are wanted to attract the heathen. Isn't that what you meant, Harold?"

"Not exactly," said the bishop. "What I feel is——"

"Still, I shall attract them. You can't deny that. After all, I attracted you."

## II.—SONNY

**I**T WAS late in November and it had been raining without cessation for more than three weeks—not vigorously, as I have seen it rain in New York and Philadelphia, but with a dull persistence, as it rains nowhere else except in the West of Ireland. Rain there seems—at certain, indeed at most seasons of the year—to be the normal thing, as if the genius that presides over the weather had turned on rain and then gone to sleep. The country was saturated, and I, though well inured to the climate of Connaught, felt that the pervading damp was getting on my nerves. I was dry in bed at night—I did not seem to be dry anywhere else. I confess that my temper was bad.

John Cassidy met me on the road a mile from my house at four o'clock one afternoon. He was standing at the bottom of a muddy lane that leads up to the wretchedly poor cabin in which he lives. I realised at once that he was waiting for me. I sighed.

John Cassidy is an excellent fellow—what we call a decent poor man—and I would do a good deal for him; but I did not want to do anything for him just then. I wanted to get home and change my sodden clothes. I had been tramping

through the rain all day. I wanted hot tea. I wanted tobacco. I wanted a deep chair in front of a fire.

John Cassidy also wanted something—something from me. Therefore I sighed.

"I'd be glad," he said, "if your reverence would step up and take a look at herself—and maybe say a word to her that would do her good."

Herself was, of course, Mrs. Cassidy. It is in this way that we speak of our wives in the West of Ireland. It is, I think, a beautiful and respectful way of speaking of them. The use of the pronoun in this absolute fashion suggests that for each of us there is no other woman in the world, but only the one; and that is as it should be.

"There's a kind of weakness on her," said John Cassidy; "and it's worse she's getting instead of better."

I grasped at a ray of hope. I am, after all, a clergyman—not a doctor. A weakness is a physical rather than a spiritual malady. I could scarcely be expected to cure her.

"Why don't you get the doctor if she's ill?" I asked.

I was standing in a pool of water, but that made very little difference to me. My boots had been soaked through for hours.

"I had the doctor," said Cassidy. "I had him four times and I paid him twice, and it's very little good he did her."

Doctors are not of much use if you take them off the beaten track. In the face of a recognised disease—measles, pneumonia, or appendicitis, something they can look up in a book—they make some kind of fight. When they come up against anything as vague and formless as a weakness they can very rarely do anything.

"He gave her a bottle, I suppose," I said bitterly.

In Ireland we describe every medicine as a bottle—and we are beginning to lose faith in bottles.

"For all the good it did her," said Cassidy, "it might as well have been water that was in it; though I will say for that bottle it smelt powerful bad when you took the cork out of it."

"I don't see," I said, "that I'm likely to be of much use."

"It could be," said Cassidy, "that if your reverence was to speak a word to her it might comfort her."

This was, of course, possible. I followed John Cassidy up the lane.

On the way to the cabin he explained more fully the nature of the weakness.

"It's been coming on her," he said, "ever since the young lad went from us. Two years ago he took the notion into his head that he'd go to America—and he went."

I knew that. We had all discussed the departure of the Cassidys' son; but he had been gone two years and I had seen Mrs. Cassidy many times



since. She seemed none the worse. Cassidy read my thoughts with that uncanny intuition which you often find among west of Ireland peasants.

"At the first go off," he said, "you wouldn't have thought she minded—no more than another would anyway; but the weakness was within, in the inside of her, and it's lately that it has begun to come out."

I listened to a list of symptoms. It seemed that Mrs. Cassidy had lost heart and no longer took any pleasure in life. She baked bread; she washed clothes; she fed the pig—but she did these things without zest.

"It's seldom ever I can get her to go as far as the town on a market day," said Cassidy; "and she doesn't care if she never saw a neighbour woman or heard a word of what's going on."

"You couldn't get her to put a shawl over her head and go as far as the road—not if you was to offer her a fistful of gold for doing it."

This was plainly an evil case; but it seemed scarcely likely that my words would charm away so lethal an apathy.

"You'd think now," said Cassidy, "that she was no more than able just to put the one foot in front of the other."

He whispered these words in my ear, for we had reached the door of the cottage and it stood open. I went in and Cassidy followed me.

Mrs. Cassidy was sitting on a stool in the chim-

ney corner, crouching over a fire that had burned low. There was a great round pot at her feet, with glowing cinders underneath it and grey, ash-covered coals piled on its lid. In such pots the west of Ireland people bake their bread, and Mrs. Cassidy, no doubt, had a loaf in hers; but she was not watching her pot.

I got accustomed to the gloom of the house and I could see that her eyes were fixed on something beyond the pot, beyond the chimney corner and beyond the house itself. They had a long, sorrowful look in them. For a while she seemed unconscious that we were in the room with her. Her husband roused her.

"Do you not see," he said, "that his reverence is here? Will you not give him a chair the way he'll be able to take an air of the fire? He's wet through so he is."

Mrs. Cassidy's courtesy overcame the weakness that was on her. She stood up and bowed to me with that air of quiet, unassertive dignity which the west of Ireland peasant possesses in common with the best-bred members of the English aristocracy. Neither squalor, on the one hand, nor the surroundings of the smart set, on the other, can rob a woman of this great-lady manner if it is born in her.

Having bowed, Mrs. Cassidy drew forward a chair and wiped the seat of it with her apron.

"It's pleased I am to see your reverence," she said, "either now or at any other time."

I sat down. John Cassidy gave me a meaning glance, and then said he was going out to see whether the young heifer had broken down the wall which separated her field from the potato patch. It is, I know, the habit of young heifers to break walls. The young of all species do it. I have heard of young girls—but their doings are no concern of mine. They may break all the walls of all the conventions without interference from me.

Nor do I think that John Cassidy cared much whether his heifer had broken her wall or not. The potatoes had long since been dug. The ground in which they grew would suffer no harm by the incursions of a young heifer. He was making an excuse to escape, so that I should be left alone to speak to Mrs. Cassidy the word which might do her good and help to remove the weakness that was on her.

For some time Mrs. Cassidy and I sat in silence, one on each side of the fire. I looked at her and noted a slovenliness in her attire that was new to me. She used to be a neat, trim woman, even when she was going about the business of cleaning her house and feeding her pig.

I noticed that the hens wandered unchecked about the floor of the room. They pecked and scratched among the ashes on the hearth. They sprang up

on the dresser, where plates and jugs stood in rows. They were free with all that was in the house. This was not Mrs. Cassidy's way with hens. In the old days an intruding fowl, unless it were a chicken in delicate health, was ruthlessly driven from the door. Now Mrs. Cassidy was apathetic.

It is only very good friends who can sit opposite each other without speaking. Silence is usually embarrassing to civilised people. I confess that our long silence began to embarrass me, and it came as a relief when Mrs. Cassidy began to speak. Her words fell from her slowly and scarcely seemed to be addressed to me. It was rather as if she spoke a monologue, telling to the brooding spirit of her home the tale of her sorrow.

"It was three years ago that the fancy first took him. Before that he was always contented enough."

I knew she was speaking about her boy—her son, who had gone to America.

"His name," she added, "was Michael Antony; but it was Sonny we called him."

I waited, for I had nothing to say. There are scores of these sonnies, whose names are really something else. The mother love that cleaves to the pet name is the same for all of them; so is the heartbreak for the mother.

"I don't rightly know," she went on, "how the notion of America came to him first. You'd think he was contented enough. It wasn't that his father was hard on him. The lad had no more to do than



what he seemed willing for. He had a decent suit of clothes to wear of a Sunday or a fair day, and nobody denied him his share of any pleasuring there might be in it—the like of a football kicking, or maybe a dance at an odd time; but the notion took him and nothing would do him only to go to America. I was against it and so was his father.”

Mrs. Cassidy relapsed into silence again. She seemed to have forgotten my presence altogether. Then suddenly she looked at me and added a word of explanation—a pathetically unnecessary word.

“His name was Michael Antony, but it was Sonny we did be calling him. Well,” she went on, “nothing would do him but to write to his Aunt Matilda, who’s out in Pittsburgh and married to a man that went from this parish. I never seen her myself, but she was his father’s sister. Sonny was always a good scholar and he was well fit to write a letter to his aunt or to any other one. We kept him to his schooling regular, only when there might be a press of work at the hay or the like of that, so as he’d be wanted at home. It was always his father’s wish and my own that he’d get good learning while he could—and he got it. There wasn’t a better speller than Sonny; and the way he’d write, a blind man could have read it!”

The half door of the cottage was opened and two girls came in. I looked round and recognised the Cassidys’ little daughters, children of twelve and

fourteen years of age, with school satchels over their arms.

"Norah Kate," said Mrs. Cassidy, "your dinner's waiting for you and Susan's along with it. Will you sit down now and eat it? And, before you do, let Susy hoosh the hens out of the house. It's too bold those same hens is getting."

The children did as they were bidden, without speaking. Doubtless they shouted and laughed elsewhere, in the school playground or on the roadside. Here at home they were silent. It may have been my presence that awed them; but I think that even the merriest child would have found it hard to laugh in the house where Mrs. Cassidy ceaselessly mourned for Sonny, whose real name was Michael Antony.

When Mrs. Cassidy spoke again the hens had been driven forth and the two girls were sitting at the table, with a bowl of boiled potatoes between them.

"It was a month, or maybe a little more, before the answer came back from his aunt; but when it did come I was glad to see it. What she said was that it would be no use for Michael Antony—his name was Michael Antony, though it was Sonny we always called him—that it would be no use for him to go to America. The times was bad out there, she said, and little likelihood of their getting better. Let the boy stay where he is, she said, where he has a living to get without working the

flesh off his bones. Let him not go there, she said, or else he'd be sorry for it after. Well, you'd think that would have contented him and put the notion of America out of his head—and so it did seemingly."

The hens, grown bold by long impunity, had made their way into the house again; but Mrs. Cassidy was roused now.

"Norah Kate," she said, "will you and Susy put them hens out and yourselves along with the hens! Don't you see I'm talking to his reverence?"

Mrs. Cassidy, like most good women, had small respect for her daughters. Sonny, I imagine—had Sonny remained at home—might have sat out the visit of a bishop. His mother would have considered his presence an honour to the highest ecclesiastic; but daughters, even though their fathers spoil them, never stand so high as sons in the opinion of a good mother. Norah Kate and Susy knew their place. They went out, driving the hens before them. Mrs. Cassidy took the loaf out of the pot oven and set it on the table to cool. Then she sat down again on her stool and went on with her story:

"Seemingly he was contented enough and had given up the notion of America when he seen that his aunt was against him going. It was well pleased we were. His father gave him a calf for his own and I took care that he didn't want for a shilling in his pocket, so as he wouldn't be

ashamed before his comrades—and them maybe spending more or less in the town after a football kicking or the like.

“Well, for as much as six months there wasn’t a word out of him about America, and we thought he was settled down for good. Then one day, all of a sudden, he walked in on us, the same as it might be you walking in this minute: ‘I’m off to America, to-morrow,’ says he. ‘I’ve sold the young bullock’—it was a young bullock the calf was by that time—‘and I have my passage booked; and there’s no use your talking, for my mind’s made up.’

“I knew well enough it was no use talking, for Sonny was always terrible stubborn once his mind was made up. He wouldn’t change, not if the King of England was to go down on his knees to him. He went the next morning, sure enough.”

“He’ll be back some day,” I said feebly.

“He’ll not be back,” said Mrs. Cassidy; “or if he is I won’t be here to see him. I buried one and I’ve lost the other. Is it any wonder my heart is broke to pieces?”

A poet—Tennyson, I think—speaks of the words of the comforter as “Vacant chaff, well meant for grain.” I felt the truth of this description when I tried to talk to Mrs. Cassidy. She felt the same thing, I suppose, for she cut me short.

“Never a word did we hear of him or from him from that day to this,” she said. “I made Norah



Kate write a letter to his aunt out in Pittsburgh, to know if she'd seen the lad. It was a good letter and well written, though Norah Kate isn't the equal of Sonny for writing. But what use was it? He hadn't been near his aunt—nor she hadn't heard from him. All she said was that America's a big country and Michael Antony might be somewhere in it without her knowing. It was Michael Antony she said in her letter, not knowing that it was Sonny we always called him, though, of course, Michael Antony was his name."

I plodded home that evening along the muddy road and my heart in me was as sorrowful as the grey clouds which hung low over my head. Mrs. Cassidy's tragedy is the tragedy of Ireland. Their names are many, though we call them all Sonny. They go from us to a land that is very far off and we are left to grow old alone.

It was on Christmas Eve that I saw Mrs. Cassidy again. I did not mean to go to see her; but I was passing along the road and Norah Kate was watching for me at the end of the lane, as her father had watched for me a month before.

"My mother says," she said, "will your reverence step up to the house for a minute the way she'll be able to speak to you? For there's something that she wants to say."

It had rained steadily day and night since the last time I visited the Cassidys' house. The lane

that led to it was like a running river. I picked my way from one large stone to another. I crawled along through deep mud beside the wall. Norah Kate, barefooted and therefore indifferent, splashed gaily beside me. Boots and trousers are a curse! If we had any sense we should wear kilts, as our remote ancestors did, and protect the soles of our feet with sandals.

The yard outside the house was incredibly filthy. The manure heap and the pigsty had—if the expression can be used of them—overflowed their banks. The thatch of the house was sodden and stained green in great patches. I expected to see worse desolation inside.

I was mistaken. Mrs. Cassidy met me at the door. She was bright-eyed and alert. She wore a clean apron. A bright turf fire burned on the hearth. There were sprigs of holly on the shelves of the dresser.

“You’ve had news of Sonny!” I said.

“Well, now, you’re a wonderful man, so you are!” said Mrs. Cassidy. “How did you know that, when it’s no more than an hour ago that the letter came?”

“It wasn’t hard to guess,” I said. “A merry Christmas to you, Mrs. Cassidy!”

“I was sitting by the side of the fire,” she said, “after himself and the two little girleens had their breakfast ate, the same as I’d sat many’s the day—God forgive me! I see now that I oughtn’t ever

to have given in the way I did. Well, I was sitting by the fire and himself was out about the place, and the two girls were playing themselves, when all of a sudden Susy ran in on me——”

“It was me and not Susy!” said Norah Kate.

“What matter the which of you it was?” said Mrs. Cassidy. “My own belief is it was the two of ye together—and says she: ‘The postman’s coming up the lane.’ ‘He is not!’ I said. ‘He couldn’t be, for the lane leads nowhere but to this house—and who’d be writing a letter to one of us?’

“That was what I said; but I knew well that the postman was coming—and I knew that it was a letter from Sonny he had for me. I knew it by the way my heart was beating so as I could hear the noise of it with my ears—till all of a sudden it stopped entirely and I had to take hold of the table with my two hands, so as I wouldn’t fall. That’s what made me know there was a letter from Sonny; but I wasn’t fit to go to the door to get it—not if I’d been given the crown of the Queen of Spain I couldn’t have moved. Norah Kate got the letter.”

“Me, and Susy along with me,” said Norah Kate.

She is a fair-minded child. She objected to being deprived of her glory as the first bearer of the news; but she was jealous for her sister’s honour too. Norah Kate and Susy together had taken the letter from the postman.

“I seen by the stamp on it,” said Mrs. Cassidy,

"that it was an American letter; and as soon as I seen that, the sight of my eyes went from me and I seen no more. It was Norah Kate read the letter."

"I did," said Norah Kate.

"Norah Kate's a good scholar," said Mrs. Cassidy; "and well she may be, for we've kept her regular to school; but sure it's small credit to her to be able to read Sonny's letter, for he's a beautiful writer. Would you like now, your reverence, that she'd read it for you?"

Mrs. Cassidy fumbled in the bosom of her dress and drew out a letter, already crumpled with much handling—already, I think, stained with tears of joy. I spared Norah Kate the task of reading it again. Sonny's handwriting is really very legible.

"‘DEAREST FATHER AND MOTHER,’ he wrote: ‘This comes hoping to find you as well as it leaves me presently. Within is an order for twenty dollars. It’s what I’d like to have sent before, only I hadn’t it till now—nor I wouldn’t write so long as I’d nothing to send; but I’ve fine earning now and I’ve made good, which is what they say out here. I’d like you to get something for the Christmas, and a cake or the like of that for Norah Kate and Susy. And you needn’t be afraid of spending it—for there’s plenty more where this comes from.’”



"My father and Susy is gone into the town," said Norah Kate; "and there's a grand doll, with a pink dress on her, in Mary Finnegan's shop, and it's to be got for Susy and me."

"What signifies the doll, or the money either?" said Mrs. Cassidy. "It's the letter I'm thinking of. Go on with it now, your reverence. I'd never be tired listening to it."

"‘The place I'm in,’ Sonny wrote, ‘would strike you as mighty queer, not being like what you're accustomed to at home. How's father? And how's the polly cow? And, hoping that you're keeping your own health,

“‘Your loving SONNY.’”

"It was Sonny we called him," said Mrs. Cassidy; "but his name was Michael Antony."

"‘P.S.,’ I read. ‘I didn't go near Aunt Matilda, for fear she might think I was wanting something from her, which is what I wouldn't take if she offered it to me—after the letter she wrote saying it would be better for me not to come out. But I'll take a run down to see her some day when I'm through with the job I'm at. I want nothing from her now—thanks be to God! But it might be some time before I get going, for Pittsburgh's a long way from this—farther than you'd think.’”

"Sonny was always terrible stubborn and independent," said Mrs. Cassidy. "Since ever he was

in his cradle he'd do what he thought fit and do it the way he chose himself. He'd not be under a compliment to e'er a one."

I next heard of Michael Antony Cassidy—whom his mother called Sonny—under circumstances that made the rain-swept, desolate Connaught land seem like a half-forgotten dream. I was in the smoking room of one of the great liners, crossing the Atlantic for the first time in my life, and full of curiosity about the land I was to visit. In one corner of the room was a group of men playing some card game I did not understand. At other tables sat more men, talking in a lazy, desultory way. There is no use talking rapidly on shipboard. Why shoot remarks at your neighbour when you have all day long with nothing to do except hand them to him quietly?

All by themselves in the farthest corner of the room sat the only two men who seemed to be in earnest about what they were doing. They were playing chess. Their absorption in the game must have created a kind of atmosphere round them that their fellow voyagers found distasteful. They were isolated and several seats were vacant near them. I sat down beside them, not because I care much for chess—it is a game that bores me—or because I wanted to be earnest; but because I like to have room to stretch my legs and to spread my elbows.

I suppose, however, that their atmosphere influenced me when I breathed it. I watched the game without knowing or caring much about it; but I observed the players with some interest. They were both young men. They both had eagerly intelligent faces. The fact that they were not drinking either beer or coffee convinced me that they were Americans. Chess-players of any other nation drink either beer or coffee while they play. Americans seldom drink anything except iced water or cocktails—and neither one nor other is a possible drink while playing chess.

I guessed they were university men—possibly professors; certainly athletes. Then I guessed again, making up my mind that they were business men, with ample leisure for golf. They were certainly accustomed to use their brains. They certainly lived a good deal in the open air.

The game came to an end before I guessed any more. One of the players knocked the ashes out of his pipe and declared that he was going to bed. The other disclaimed sleepiness and lit a cigar. We began to talk and—of all subjects in the world—hit on American politics.

Now politics is not, in my opinion, a fit subject for conversation anywhere. If you talk your own politics—the politics of your native land—you are sure to lose your temper or else the other man will lose his. If you talk the politics of another nation you yawn and finally go to sleep, because all for-

eign politics, being quite uncomprehensible, are dull. American politics are to me the dullest of all, because I never get anywhere near understanding them. Nevertheless it was American politics my keen-eyed chess-player talked.

I listened and gained nothing from his denunciation of one party or the other. I forget now which it was that he denounced. At last I asked my question. I call it mine because I have asked it eighteen times of eighteen Americans and got eighteen different answers to it: "Why is there no Labour party in America—no Labour party that runs candidates in frank opposition to Republicans and Democrats alike, as the English Labour party opposes both Conservatives and Liberals?"

This is, I think, an intelligent question. There are labourers in America—immense numbers of them. It seems odd that they should be satisfied with either of the old-established parties. My new friend pondered the answer for a minute. Then he gave me his answer—a clear-cut, logically complete answer, which did not satisfy me in the least.

"America," he said, "is a land of free opportunities for all. Any man, no matter how he starts, may become rich."

"Lots of men do," I said. "Look at — and —." I named two worthy millionaires who happened to be on board our steamer.

"Well," said my friend, "if a man thinks he's going to be rich—and every labourer in America



thinks that—he's not going to help the other labourers to combine against capital, is he?"

I suppose my face showed that I did not regard this as a satisfactory explanation of the failure of American civilisation to produce a Labour party. My friend went on to justify his general statement by quoting a particular case.

"I'm an engineer," he said, "and I'm in charge of a big job away out in what you'd call the wilds. That section isn't settled much—just a few farmers scattered about; and my crowd fixed up in a little wooden town the company built for them. There are a couple of thousand of them—and a pretty tough lot they are—Slavs mostly, with a sprinkling of Italians. Scum!"

He spoke the last word with venom that surprised me in a citizen of the land of human equality—the land that fought to secure the negro his rights as a man and a brother.

"Some time ago," he went on, "we had trouble with them—not a strike; it doesn't come to that—just trouble over some agreement the company made the men sign. I'm not saying it was quite a legal agreement, for it wasn't; but it was good enough and nobody lost by it. Well, the trouble wouldn't have amounted to much if it hadn't been for a big, husky Russian—a sulky devil of a man who started talking about knifing the company's officers, chiefly me.

"I knew what was going on, but I didn't see

my way to stop it. I just slept with a gun handy and kept my eyes open during the day. I watched that Russian pretty close. You can't blame a Russian, of course, for wanting to knife people. Murder seems to be the only way of getting the necessary reforms in their country, and this fellow wasn't long out of it. All the same, I didn't want to be an innocent victim."

I think my engineer friend showed a nice spirit in making excuses for the Russian.

"Well, one day the whole conspiracy just got bursted. There was a little Irishman—the only one we had in the whole crowd, for the Irish are a bit above that kind of work now. The Russian was making a speech one evening and the rest of the men were cheering him. He was a big brute, well over six feet high. I was a football player when I was in college, but I don't mind owning that I should have thought twice before engaging in a scrap with that Russian.

"My little Irishman didn't think more than once. He walked right up to the Russian, and when he was standing in front of him he didn't reach up beyond where the top button of the Russian's waistcoat would have been if he'd had a waistcoat. 'Listen to me now, son!' said the Irishman: 'Just you can that talk about knives and killing. It's not wanted here.' The Russian kind of collapsed, and that was the end of our labour trouble."

"It's an interesting story," I said; "but I don't

quite see what it has to do with the curious fact that there's no effective Labour party in America."

"It's got this to do with it: Cassidy expects to be a capitalist some day—and he doesn't want any Russian coming round and knifing him when the time comes. See that?"

I did not even try to see it. The matter had ceased, for the moment, to interest me. My attention was fixed on the Irishman's name.

"Did you say Cassidy?" I asked.

"Yes. And if you look out you'll see that name on the list of first-class passengers on one of these boats pretty soon. He'll be down as having engaged a suite of rooms on B Deck."

"Was he by any chance called Michael Antony?" I asked.

"The men called him Mick," said my friend; but of course, that's common with all Irishmen. Now I come to think of it, I believe it was Michael Antony he wrote when he signed as an overseer. I made him overseer after he laid out the Russian."

"That," I said, "was probably last November."

"It was—sure. But how did you guess?"

"I happened to hear another part of the same story from his mother," I said. "It was Sonny she called him, but his real name was Michael Antony."

"Sonny or Micky," said my friend, "the name will be worth having on the bottom of a cheque some day soon. That little Irishman will make good! He's got grit!"

### III.—ONNIE DEVER

**O**NNIE is a girl's name and it is not a mispronunciation of Annie. It is a convenient shortening of Honoria, which is far too majestic a name for a child.

It would have been grotesque to call Onnie Dever Honoria when I knew her first—though the long name would suit her very well now.

Indeed she is so grand now that I should not dare to call her anything but Miss Dever; and if I had to address a letter to her my inclination would be to embellish her name and write on the outside of the envelope: The Honourable Honoria—or to Her Honour, Honoria Dever. This would be wrong, of course; but any one who has seen the lady lately would find it excusable.

When Onnie Dever was young she lived with her parents and a great many other little Devers on an island off the coast of Connaught, which is the poorest of the four provinces of Ireland. The Atlantic Ocean washes the shores of Connaught, and Onnie's home was an island in that great sea. It was not, however, a very remote island. Only a narrow channel separated it from the mainland, and this channel went nearly dry at the bottom



of a low tide. At the age of five—and legs are very short at the age of five—Onnie could splash across the channel when a spring tide was at its ebb.

There was no need for her to take off her shoes and stockings, for in those days she never wore any. When the tide was high the water in the channel was fifteen feet deep, and the only way of getting to the mainland was by boat.

The island was a very small one. It had two little cottages on it. One belonged to Onnie's father, whose name was Tom Dever; the other to her uncle, who was John Dever. John had nine children, and among them a Honoria, also called Onnie. This might have been confusing elsewhere, but in Connaught we have a way of getting over the difficulty of these similarities of name.

Tom's daughter was called Onnie Dever Tom, and the other girl was Onnie Dever John. It was thus that their names were entered in the register of the school they attended. And the school register is a solemn book inspected from time to time by a Government official—a book in which no one would venture to perpetrate a slang phrase or indulge in a joke. It is with Onnie Dever Tom that I am now concerned.

The children of the two families, some eight or ten of them at a time, went to school on the mainland. John and Tom took turns in ferrying them across the channel. When the time came for their

return they stood in a group on the opposite shore and shouted until either John or Tom put out in a boat and ferried them home.

At very high tides the boat ran aground close up to Tom Dever's house, and an active child standing in the bow could jump right into the kitchen through the doorway—could almost have jumped into bed; but tides are as high as that only in March and September. During the rest of the year there is a small patch of beach to cross, even at full tide.

When I first met Onnie she must have been fourteen or fifteen years of age. She had stopped going to school. Her education was then complete; for she had reached what is called the sixth standard, and that is as far as the Irish educational authorities think a normal child ought to go.

At that time she possessed shoes and stockings, but wore them only on Sundays when she crossed to the mainland to go to church. The rest of the week she went barefooted, which was an economy for her parents and a convenience to herself. If you live on an island that, as well as being surrounded by, is also saturated with, water, it is much better to do without shoes and stockings.

I was sailing in a small boat, and the passage between the Devers' island and the mainland offered me a short cut home. The tide was ebbing, and the wind was very light. I knew I ought not to try the passage—that there probably would not be

water enough for my boat; but I allowed myself to be tempted, hoping I might creep through.

The luck was all against me. The tide swept me down to a submerged rock. I heard the ominous banging of my centreboard. I hauled it up hurriedly. My boat, deprived of her power of going to windward, drifted sideways to the shore. I made desperate efforts to push her off and failed. The tide, ebbing swiftly, left my boat high and dry. I looked up and saw Onnie standing on the shore grinning.

I had to wait until the tide rose again. I am bound to say the time passed very pleasantly. Onnie was alone on the island, except for the youngest of John's children, who was a baby and lay placidly in a cradle near the fire. Onnie's father and mother, and John and his wife, had gone to our town to attend a fair. All the other children were at school. Onnie—that is, of course, Onnie Tom—had been left to take care of the island and the baby. I imagine she must have found her work dull, for she seemed really pleased to see me. She immediately offered to make tea for me.

I got the sails off my boat and followed her into the cottage. I realised almost at once that Onnie was a young woman with a future before her. She displayed a surprising efficiency in making tea. The fire was almost out when we entered the cottage. Onnie had it blazing round the kettle in a couple of minutes. She got out her mother's best cups

and saucers. She cut slices of bread from a home-baked loaf, laid them flat along the palm of her hand and buttered them lavishly.

All the time she was at work she talked to me without shyness or embarrassment. Her subject was, of course, ready to hand and a tempting one—my stupidity in not getting my boat through the passage. In Onnie's opinion the thing could have been done. She explained to me with force exactly where my seamanship had been at fault.

From that we passed to the subject of boats in general, and the shortcomings of my particular boat. She happened to be a vessel of which I was both proud and fond. Onnie found out what my feelings were, and took the greatest pleasure in hurting them. This lasted until we had both finished tea. Then Onnie asked me whether I would like a lobster to take home with me. She said she knew of a hole in which there was generally a lobster lying.

We went out together to look for the lobster. No man of proper feelings would allow a young lady—it was as a young lady and not as a child that I had come to think of Onnie—to wade knee-deep after a fierce shellfish while he sat dry-footed on the shore. I took off my shoes and socks and followed Onnie into the middle of the channel. I hurt my feet a good deal and got very wet. Onnie gathered her single petticoat out of reach of the water, rolled up her sleeves and plunged her arms elbow-deep among the seaweed.



She brought out a lobster that had been lying—secure, it thought—under a ledge of rock. It flapped its tail furiously and made grabs in the air with its claws. Onnie held it by the middle of its back and laughed at its struggles.

I carried that lobster home with me and ate it. If I had known how great a lady Onnie was going to become afterwards I should have had the lobster stuffed and put in a glass case, so as to be able to offer it as evidence of the fact that I had been on intimate terms with Miss Dever in her early youth.

The next time I saw Onnie was two years later,

and she was again in pursuit of shellfish. It was a very calm summer day and I was far out in the bay in my boat. The tide was a spring tide—one of those that come in a long way and go out until one thinks the sea will disappear altogether. It was at its ebb at noon.

There is in our bay, beyond the farthest of the islands, a long reef of rocks which is well covered at half tide. It is just awash at the ebb of an ordinary tide, but emerges long and brown for a couple of hours when the spring tides have gone out their farthest. I slipped down towards this reef about noon, sailing free, with a gentle breeze on my quarter. A boat—a large, heavy black boat—lay with her bows out of the water at the end of the reef.

Among the rocks, scattered here and there, were

eight or ten girls, barefooted, bareheaded, and bare-armed. Each of them had a tin can. They were gathering periwinkles among the pools. I could hear their voices as they shouted to each other. I bore slowly down on them and then, hauling my wind, circled round the outer side of the reef. I recognised Onnie Dever, most eager picker of all of them—busiest gathering the periwinkles; busiest at shouting jests; readiest with her laughter.

I drew past the reef and sailed away reflecting on the fate of the periwinkles. Dragged from their cool and pleasant homes they would be measured out in pints and quarts, paid for by the man who bought them with sixpences and shillings, which would go to buy ribbons for Onnie and her friends. Then, boiled and packed in huge cases, they would go to Manchester and to Warrington—to any of the group of smoke-grimed Lancashire towns where cotton is spun. There they would be piled in street barrows, with green labels stuck on them, and sold to pallid women to be eaten as a relish—picked from their shells with a pin and poised on slices of bread and margarine.

It seemed a far cry from our sunny bay to the flare-lit market-place of Bolton on a Saturday night—a great change from the sound of the laughter of merry girls to the raucous cries of the vendors. Such, I reflected, are the tricks that fate plays with us in life. As is the periwinkle so is the man—a card in a pack shuffled by a sportive destiny.

Sailing on summer seas leads naturally to facile philosophy; but, lest I should sentimentalise helplessly and lose my self-respect, I put my boat about and stood back towards the reef.

The girls were crowding into their boat when I reached them. Already the rising tide had covered most of the rocks, and left only the higher ones standing up like islands in a kind of Saragasso Sea of swaying brown weed. Onnie was the last to embark; giving one final shove-off with her foot she slid across the bow of the boat, climbed sternward and took the stroke oar.

Six of the girls rowed, keeping time and stroke with Onnie. When she started a song for them their bodies swung with her music. The breeze had nearly died away. The row-boat, with its sturdy pullers, soon distanced me; but for a long time I heard the girls' songs and fancied that I could distinguish Onnie's voice clear above the others.

In December of that year I saw Onnie Dever again under far different circumstances. It was at the railway station, and it chanced to be the day of the week on which the emigrants start in order to catch the transatlantic steamer at Queenstown. In those days the tide of Irish emigration still ran strong, and it was worth the while of even the largest liners to call at Queenstown.

The scene on these occasions at our railroad station is one to which the experience of twenty years

has not been able to make me indifferent. The pain and heartbreak of it are as keen to-day as they were when first I saw it. On the platform are women—old women for the most part, mothers and grandmothers—weeping without restraint. Their eyes are swollen; their cheeks are tear-stained. Every now and then one of them wails aloud, and the others, catching the sound, wail with her, their voices rising and falling in a weird melody, like the Church's ancient plain song.

The men stand more silent; but very often their eyes are wet, too. Their lips, tightly pressed, twitch spasmodically. Occasionally an uncontrollable sob breaks from one of them.

The windows of the railway carriages are crowded with the faces of boys and girls, all of them weeping with the helpless abandonment of sheer despair. The engine whistles. There is a rush to the carriage windows. Faces and hands are thrust out of them. There is a frenzied pressing of lips to lips, a clinging of fingers intertwined, until some railway official, mercifully brutal, by main force pushes the people back.

The train moves slowly and gathers speed. A long, sad cry comes from the people left behind, swelling to a pitch of actual agony, until some brave soul somewhere in the crowd chokes down a sob, waves his hat, and makes a pretence to cheer.

That day I saw among the crowd on the plat-



form Tom Dever and his wife. They were both weeping. I looked at the window of the carriage in front of them and saw Onnie.

Alone among the crowd of departing girls she was not crying. Her face was very pale. Her eyes, unnaturally large, seemed full of the sorrow of farewell; but her head was proudly posed. She stood upright while the others stooped or crouched.

I felt a sudden thrill. The girl was going out into a wide, strange world, sad, but not in despair—going to win through, to conquer, not to be beaten. From the carriage in which I sat I heard the last loud cry as the train moved out—the blessing, “God be with you, and good luck!”—the pitiful cheer; and then Onnie’s voice, clear above the wailing:

“Good-bye! Good-bye!”

I bade farewell to Onnie an hour later when I left the train at the station where I had to stop. I asked her whether she wanted to go to America or would rather have stayed at home. Her answer seemed to me characteristic of the fatalism of our people.

“Sure, it was before me anyway,” she said; “and it might as well be now as some other time. What was there for me at home?—only the daylight.”

There was, of course, more than the daylight. There were lobsters in that cleft of the rock, to be hauled out of it when the tide was low. I reminded

Onnie of the lobster she once caught for me and she smiled wanly. There were also periwinkles among the pools on the outlying reef. Onnie remembered them well enough.

"It was out of the price of them," she said, "that I made the money to pay my passage—what was wanted along with what my aunt sent home. I made a deal out of the periwinkles last summer."

So it was for a ticket to America and not for ribbons that the money went; but it must have been hard to save enough!

"I kept what I got," said Onnie; "and along with the few shillings I had in the Post Office Savings Bank I had enough to buy what clothes was wanted. Do you mind the shilling you gave me the day I made the cup of tea for you? Well, that was the first shilling ever I had of my own; and I put it in the savings bank."

"Do you mean to tell me——" I said.

I got no further, for the train started and Onnie was borne away from me. I am no stranger to the power of saving possessed by the West of Ireland peasants. It no longer surprises me to find that some small farmer, who has lived all his life in extreme penury, leaves fortunes of fifty pounds each to his three daughters when he dies—money gathered well-nigh penny by penny through many years; and his at the end by virtue of an amazing power of not spending; but I confess that Onnie's hoarding startled me.

I thought of her laughing among the rocks of the reef, with the sunlight in her hair. I thought of her singing in the boat as she and the others rowed home. I have heard of girls singing blithely over their wheels as they spun flax for their bridal linen; but no man ever yet heard of a girl singing over the making of her shroud! Yet, if Onnie worked all summer in order to make money to take her to America, it must have been for her very like the sewing of a shroud.

It is thus, at all events, that the mothers of our Irish boys and girls think about the emigration to America.

"I've had seven children," one of them will say, "and I've lost five of them. Two of them I buried and three are gone to America."

And yet Onnie sang over the business merrily! I went my way, wondering what the future had hidden in it for her and what America would make of her.

I do not know the end—the final achievement of Onnie Dever; but chance gave me a glimpse of her halfway through her career. I was in one of the large cities of the Middle West, a place that boasts about its progress with boasting that is entirely justified. It is a city that has gone ahead fast in the last fifteen years, and which is destined, I imagine, to go faster yet, and to go very far. My wife was with me, and certain needs of hers

took us into a large department store. We found—I ought to say she found—the required garment or something very like it.

There was a question of certain alterations. I, who have no taste for the details of a woman's dress and am useless as an adviser on the hang of a skirt or the set of a frill, retired to some distance. I took my stand beside the gate of the lift.

Just as I left the scene of action I heard the very grandly dressed young lady who had attended to our wants offering to send for the head of the department. I turned away and found an agreeable employment for my time in explaining to the man who worked the lift that I did not want to go either up or down.

He passed frequently, for there were many customers in the store, and I had to repeat my explanation every time he reached my floor. He appeared to find it difficult to believe that any one would stand opposite the gate of the cage merely for the fun of watching him, and every time he saw me he stopped and invited me to go with him. After a while he began to lose his temper with me, and I thought it better to turn my back on him and look the other way.

Standing beside my wife, explaining to her the beauties of a certain evening gown, was Onnie Dever Tom. I recognised her at the first glance. A second look made me doubtful. A long stare and



some thought convinced me that I must be wrong.

In the first place, the lady who handled the silken flounces of the gown her subordinate held for her looked six inches taller than I remembered Onnie to have been. Long, narrow skirts, especially when very well cut, produce this illusion of height. When last I had a good look at Onnie she was wearing a crimson petticoat that reached very little below her knees. She certainly did not look tall then.

The dressing of the hair is also a disturbing thing. Onnie's, even when she was in the train on her way to the steamer, hung down her back in a long, thick pigtail. The fashion of ladies' hair-doing is not to be described by any words in the English language. I suppose I must use a French word and say that the *coiffure* of the chief of this department puzzled me; but most perplexing of all was the look of calm authority on her face.

Onnie Dever, even in her tenderest years, had a masterful way with her. I remembered how she had once lectured me on the management of boats, and how she held the flapping lobster at arm's length; but mere masterful self-assertiveness is a very different thing from settled authority. Most fools are self-assertive; but it is only the few men and women who have some strength of real wisdom in them who can reduce those round them to submissiveness, and it is the power of really ruling others that gives the look of authority to the face.

My reason told me that the young lady before me could not possibly be Onnie Dever; but a shadowy resemblance haunted me. I ventured back to the group round the gown and listened from a little distance to the description of its merits given in a high-pitched, far-carrying American voice—a voice the tones of which were as different as possible from the cooing murmurings of our Connaught speech. Certainly this was not Onnie Dever!

Then she looked up and saw me. There was a sudden flash of recognition in her glance, and I knew that, after all, my first impression was the right one.

“That gown,” I said “would not be at all suitable for going to catch lobsters in.”

It was a flimsy affair, with gold beads on it, and a kind of outer skin of very transparent material called, I believe, chiffon. Onnie and her attendant saleswoman both spoke at once in reply to my criticism.

“It would not!” said Onnie. “I’d be sorry for the one who was fool enough to try for a lobster at Carrigwee with a dress the like of that on her!”

This time her voice had the true Connaught intonation. She framed her sentences as all good Connaught girls should. She also grinned. Grin is, of course, a wrong word to use about a stately lady; but I run the risk of using it because her mouth took on the same expression exactly that

Onnie Dever's wore when she stood on the shore and watched me run my boat aground.

The assistant saleswoman neither grinned nor smiled—she sniffed.

"This is a dinner dress," she said; "but if madam wants a golfing costume we have some rough tweeds——"

It is not easy to guess why the mention of the lobster should have suggested golf to this damsel's mind. The word sport no doubt covers many things, and golf among them; but it can hardly be stretched to include the dragging of lobsters out of rocky holes along the shore.

She was never allowed to explain what her idea was. Miss Honoria Dever glanced at her. Without saying another word, without hearing one, the girl laid the dinner dress down on the chair and faded away. Such is the discipline maintained by the competent head of a department in a great store.

Then Onnie Dever Tom, no longer Honoria, turned to me with a flood of questions. I had to tell her a hundred intimate details about men and things—how this one was dead and that one married; how one cottage, known to both of us, was thatched last summer, and another had a new door; what boats caught mackerel, what hookers brought loads of winter fuel. For nearly an hour the business of selling ladies' dresses in that store was either

held up or conducted without the knowledge of the head of the department.

When Onnie had finished her questions, I began mine, and I heard a very interesting story. It began with the adventures of a girl who did odd jobs of sewing for a man who specialised in the manufacture of cheap shirt waists. It went on with an account of the struggles of a junior assistant taken on one Christmastime to assist at the "notions" counter. It reached at last the daily life of Miss Honoria Dever, head of the costume department, responsible for the fashion of the clothes of half of the smartest women in the city—leader and commander of a regiment of some thirty young women, all bound to sell, to fit, to advise, to sew—even, I imagine, to dress as Miss Honoria bade them.

She told me the salary she earned; and I, dividing her dollars by five, assured her that no man who lived anywhere round the shores of our bay—not the doctor; not the lawyer; not the priest—was earning so much as she was. Then she confided to me that she had not reached yet the end of her career. There were heights to be climbed.

There are buyers who visit New York in the season when the form and colour of clothes are decided on by the ultimate, remote authorities who settle these things. There are buyers who go out from New York itself to London and Paris, crossing the Atlantic once or twice a year, who, by virtue of some strange instinct for raiment, can be trusted to



guess in December what fabrics American women will want to buy in May.

Some day Miss Honoria will do this work—will, I feel tolerably certain, be at the very head of the elect corps of those who do it; will guess more brilliantly than the others; will buy with more infallible certainty that what she buys will be sold again.

Here I am left wondering! If Onnie Dever had remained at home she would, in the ordinary course of time, have married. In some tiny windswept cabin on an island she would have ministered to the wants of a man who returned to her day after day, wet and weary from toiling on the sea. She herself would have toiled, sometimes standing knee-deep in water beside a stranded boat while the creel on her back was filled with turf.

She would have staggered under her burden up the stony beach time after time, until the autumn darkness closed round her, and built her stack of fuel against the coming of the winter days. She would have baked great brown-crust ed loaves in pot ovens. She would have dragged scanty milk from the udders of lean cows. She would have cleaned and salted the fish her husband caught and hung them in the reek of the fire's smoke to dry. She would have patched shirts and trousers painfully until patch was joined to patch and the original fabric was no more than a memory. She would have gone barefooted, with splayed, misshapen feet,

down among the boulders of the upper beach to bring water from a brackish well.

She would have lost the fresh beauty of girlhood very speedily and ceased after a little while to care greatly that her hands were rough, her face weather-beaten and her figure ungainly. The other life, the one she has chosen, is better than that.

And yet I wonder! Onnie would have borne children. Year after year, for many years perhaps, a fresh baby would have ousted the old one from its cradle. Boys and girls would have clung about her skirts and clamoured in her ears. Slapped and kissed, scolded and caressed, they would have been a plague and a joy to her. She would have watched them grow to be men and women brave and strong. She would have known that life, the great insistent need of the universe, was going forth from her.

Which, after all, is best? Which achievement gives most satisfaction to look back on after all is over. I said good-bye to Onnie—still wondering.

## IV.—SAINTS AND SCHOLARS

### I

VERY soon after her husband's death, things began to go wrong with Mrs. Flanagan. She had "a long, weak family," which was against her. Eight children she had, and the six eldest of them were girls, who were little good on the land. Labouring men were expensive to hire, and impossible to get when they were most wanted. Cattle sickened and died mysteriously. The old mare got feeble; the young mare broke her leg in a bog-hole. Year after year the pigs brought no price, and feeding stuff was dear. For five years the widow struggled on in an incompetent manner against impossible circumstances. Then she collapsed.

She owed four years' rent to the agent, and she owed a sum which did not bear thinking of to Patrick Sweeny, Mr. Patrick Sweeny, Esq., J.P., D.C., who kept the shop. The statement of the amount of this debt brought a weakness on Mrs. Flanagan when it arrived by post, a weakness from which she did not rally for more than a week. It was impossible to believe that the Indian meal, on which she fed her children and her chickens, the occasional lock of seed potatoes, the bag or two of patent fertiliser, the grain of tea, could have cost

the monstrous sum which faced her at the foot of the bill. It was true that she had paid Mr. Patrick Sweeny no actual cash for nearly three years; but she had brought him eggs, pounds of butter, geese in the autumn, chickens in the spring; she had given her eldest daughter to his service, and twice he had bought young heifers from her. She had not investigated the condition of her account, but she believed in a vague way that things must be pretty even between her and Mr. Patrick Sweeny. The sudden disclosure of the real condition of affairs brought on the weakness.

She rallied to discover that she was going to be evicted. On the whole, she received the news with a sense of relief. Her farm was a good one, held at a judicial rent. The tenant's interest would sell for a respectable sum. The agent's claim would be satisfied, Mr. Patrick Sweeny's bill settled, and she would have enough left to pay her way to America. There, no doubt, the girls would get something to do. Anyway, she would have a little money in her pocket, and "Sure, God is good."

In due time notices appeared in the local paper of a sale by auction of the tenant's interest in Gorteen farm. There was much talk in the neighbourhood. It was reckoned that £250 would not be too high a price to pay for the place, and that maybe it would fetch £300. The land was good, and the rent was moderate. The manager of the local branch of the Dublin Bank was consulted by



more than one ambitious speculator. He was willing to make advances to his customers for the purpose of purchasing the farm. The tenant's interest in the land was good security. There was every prospect of brisk bidding at the auction.

## II

Mr. Patrick Sweeny, Esq., J.P., Chairman of the D.C.—it was thus that he liked his friends to describe him on the outside of the envelopes—was a great man in the locality. A very large number of people owed him money, and, therefore, were obliged to vote as he wished them to vote at elections. Therefore, he was Chairman of the District Council. His son was inspector of sheep-dipping, at a salary. His son-in-law was rate-collector, with a salary. He himself held the Union contracts for potatoes, turf, milk, flour, and meal, and sometimes acknowledged that he made a profit out of them. One of his nephews was the dispensary doctor; his salary was small, but he made something out of his private practice. Mr. Patrick Sweeny frequently advanced to impecunious farmers the amount necessary to pay the doctor's fees. Another nephew was Member of Parliament for the Southern Division of the County; he also drew a salary.

Once, a very long time ago, it was extremely profitable in Ireland to be connected with one of the great families. A man prospered if he was

second cousin to Lord Shannon, or married to a distant relative of Mr. Ponsonby's. We live in a democratic age, and the old iniquities are swept away. The bluest blood is no use to a man now. To have an earl for a relative is nothing. The thing to be is the son of a provincial publican, or, if that is impossible, to marry his daughter or his niece.

One evening, a week before the auction of the Widow Flanagan's farm, Mr. Patrick Sweeny sat in the room behind his shop. It was not an attractive room. The carpet bore evidence of Mr. Sweeny's habit of spitting. The table, which looked at a distance something like mahogany, had no cloth, and was marked in circles by the wet bottoms of tumblers. The wall-paper hung down here and there in strips, and bulged elsewhere in huge bubbles on account of the dampness of the walls. A tarnished cruet-stand, a britannia-metal teapot, and several wine decanters, with labels hung round their necks, adorned the sideboard.

It is the function of an upper class to maintain a standard of beautiful living. Mr. Sweeny, a leading member of our new aristocracy, did his best according to his lights. He sat over his ledger with his coat off, the better to tackle the task of adding figures together. His grey shirt-sleeves were exceedingly dirty. His waistcoat, a garment of many stains and few buttons, lay open to give freedom to the heavings of a huge paunch. Four dif-

ferent smells surrounded him. From his clothes came a heavy reek of artificial manure. His breath exhaled the fumes of whiskey. His body charged the air with an odour of stale sweat. He once boasted—a misguided reformer had proposed the erection of a bathroom in the County Infirmary—that he had not wetted his skin for seven-and-twenty years. His pipe, which he puffed as he worked, added the fourth smell. Even a violent anti-tobacconist would have been grateful, under the circumstances, to inhale the smoke of Mr. Sweeney's pipe.

There was a tap at the door, and a sluttish girl shambled into the room.

"Please sir, the doctor's within in the shop, and says you sent for him."

It would have been difficult to guess the girl's age by looking at her. She had the face of a careworn, middle-aged woman, and the figure of an undeveloped child. Her cheeks were pallid and puffy; the rest of her body was painfully thin. Her eyes were full of watchful terror and dull cunning, like the terror and the cunning of an animal which has often been hunted and expects in the end to be killed. She was fifteen years old. At that age girls ought to want to sing and dance, to be full of joyous confidence in life. This girl shambled, cowered, and lied. She was Mrs. Flanagan's eldest daughter, and she was Mr. Sweeny's servant. She had been made over into a worse than negro slav-

ery three years before, on the understanding that her wages should go to reduce the Widow Flanagan's debt to Mr. Sweeny. No actual cash changed hands. The matter was one of book-keeping. Mrs. Flanagan's debt was not, apparently, greatly reduced; but, perhaps, Delia Flanagan's services were not worth much, and, anyway, book-keeping is a difficult art—the most skillful men sometimes make mistakes in it.

"Please, sir," the girl repeated, "the doctor's within in the shop, and bid me tell you."

"Let him come in here, then. And bring you me a quart of whiskey from the bar, and a couple of tumblers. Is the pigs fed?"

"I'm after feeding them this half-hour."

"Well, get out of this, and be damned!"

Dr. Henaghan entered the room. He was a young man of genteel appearance. He wore a suit of yellow tweed, yellow gaiters strapped round his legs, and yellow boots. He smoked a cigarette. A thin moustache half concealed a feeble mouth. His pale-green eyes were shifty.

"Sit down," said Mr. Sweeny. "I want to talk to you."

"I hope there's nothing wrong with you," said the doctor. "You don't look very fit. You ought to take more exercise. Would you like me to make you up a bottle?"

"Be damned!" said Mr. Sweeny.

The girl tapped at the door again, entered, and



deposited a tray on the table. It held a bottle of whiskey, two tumblers, and a jug of water. Neither of the men spoke till she had left the room, and shut the door.

"What's this I hear about young Mrs. Gannon dying?" said Mr. Sweeny.

"Oh, she's dead, right enough." The doctor spoke airily, but he was ill at ease.

"I hear them saying she died because you were too drunk to attend her properly. What do you say to that?"

"I got a red ticket, and I went to the house. She was dead before I got there."

Mr. Sweeny brought his fist down on the table in a way that made the bottle, the glasses, and his nephew jump.

"Answer me straight now. Were you drunk, or were you not?"

"What does it matter whether I was drunk or not? Don't I tell you the woman was dead before I got there?"

"Let me have none of your back talk, for I won't take it from you or any man. I'm Chairman of the Council, and I'm bound to take notice of the complaints that is made against the doctors. I'll have a Local Government Inspector down. I'll have a sworn inquiry. I'll—I'll run you out of this."

"Look here. What's the good of making a fuss? The woman's dead, and her baby along with her. The Local Government can't have a resurrection,

can it? I don't deny that I had a drop taken, but I wasn't drunk. I could have looked after her all right if I'd been in time, but I wasn't."

"And why weren't you?"

"Oh, you know how these things go. I thought there was lots of time. I didn't want to spend half the night listening to her groaning."

"It's damned lucky for you that you are my nephew, let me tell you that. If you were any other man, you'd go. Do you hear? You'd better be mighty careful."

"If you like, I'll go to Father Tom to-morrow, and swear off the whiskey."

"You might," said Mr. Sweeny, "and you'd be none the worse if you did. But there's another thing I want to speak to you about. Get the cork out of that bottle, and fill the glasses. That's right. Now, come over here near me. I don't want to be talking loud."

Dr. Henaghan drew his chair up to his uncle's elbow, and listened attentively. Mr. Sweeny spoke at some length in a hoarse whisper. When he had finished, the doctor said:

"It's risky!"

"It'll be a deal more risky for you if I bring an Inspector down to inquire into Mrs. Gannon's death.

"I don't see what I get out of the business. Why don't you get someone else?"

"I can't trust anyone else. If the thing got out

on me, I might never get the farm. I can trust you on account of the hold I have over you with all the talk there is about Mrs. Gannon."

"It'll take me three days to go to Belfast and back and get the printing done. How can I go off for three days? Somebody else will die while I am away, and then there'll be more talk."

"Let them die. Amn't I the Chairman, and can't I get you leave of absence for a night or two? I'd like to see the man that would make talk about dying when I bid him keep his mouth shut. That part's all right."

"Why can't I draw up the notices, and get them printed somewhere else besides Belfast?"

"Do you take me for a fool? Or are you a fool yourself? Any of the printers about this part of the country would talk, or, if they didn't, their men would. Then the whole thing would come out."

"It's sure to come out sooner or later. Somebody'll find out that the League never sent out the notices."

"I don't care if it does come out, so long as it doesn't come out before the auction."

"There'll be the hell of a row afterwards!"

"There will not. I'm the biggest subscriber there is to the funds of the League. They won't want to be making a row about my doings. Besides, there's hardly a man of them but is in my books."

"How am I to post them up, supposing I had

them? Do you think I'm going round the country in the dead of night, with a pot of paste in one hand and a paint brush in the other?"

"If that's all that's troubling you, I'll send the girl to carry the paste. She's a half-witted creature, anyway, and she'd be afraid to speak, let alone that nobody would listen to her if she did itself."

"Give me a fiver for my exes, and I'll do it."

Mr. Patrick Sweeny extracted five greasy notes from a leather pocket-book, and handed them to his nephew.

### III

Two days before the auction of the Widow Flanagan's farm, the people of the neighbourhood enjoyed a sensation. A number of notices appeared on the walls and gate-posts. They were very striking notices, printed on bright-green paper, which emphasised the fact that they were in the highest degree patriotic. They were headed with these words, which stood out in large characters:

#### TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

Next, in smaller type, came a paragraph, beginning: "Whereas a heartless and abominable eviction." Then came a good deal of strong language, what English grammarians call extension of the subject, about tyrants, exterminators, Castle gov-



ernment, and other matters of a similar kind. Monotony of appearance was avoided by another bold headline:

### MEN OF CONNAUGHT.

The paragraph below it contained an appeal to the patriotic feelings of the inhabitants of the province, who were urged to defeat the schemes of the reprobates named in the first paragraph. Then, in type yet larger than that of the other headlines, came the ominous word:

### TRAITORS.

It appeared from what followed that anyone who made a bid for the Widow Flanagan's farm would be a traitor to the cause of Ireland, to the Catholic religion, the freedom of humanity, and several other high and holy things. Then, lest the mere imputation of treachery might not prove a deterrent from the practice of iniquity, it was plainly hinted that the traitor would suffer in person and in pocket from the righteous indignation of the populace. The whole wound up with a prayer, singularly appropriate at the bottom of such a notice, "God save Ireland."

The notice produced a great deal of excitement, and affected people in a number of different ways. Some energetic men set to work at once to collect

a fund for the benefit of the Widow Flanagan. This shows how excellent a thing patriotism is. Until the green notices appeared, no one had thought of doing anything for the poor evicted tenant. Mr. Patrick Sweeny headed the subscription list with a pound. Others not less energetic set to work to organise a public meeting, and telegraphed to a member of Parliament to come and address it. These men were full of joy. On the other hand, the auctioneer was depressed. He said nothing publicly, but he lamented to his wife that he had lost £10 or £15. Nobody, he thought, would now bid for the farm. It was creditable to him that after such a blow he gave ten shillings to the relief of Mrs. Flanagan. The land-agent read the notice, and was exceedingly angry. He also understood that no one would bid for the farm. He wrote a long account of the proceedings to a member of Parliament, not the same member of Parliament who was requested to address the public meeting, and a question was asked in the House of Commons, which was reported in *The Times* under the heading, "Intimidation in the West." The bank manager read the notice, and wrote to certain of his customers to say that his directors declined to authorise the advances which he had previously promised. He understood that the tenant's right in the Widow Flanagan's farm had ceased to be a satisfactory security. Mr. Sweeny served out an unusual quantity of drinks across his counter to men who

wanted to discuss the best way of dealing with land grabbers. Dr. Henaghan was found helplessly drunk outside the door of his uncle's house, and was conducted home by two policemen.

There was a large attendance at the auction next day. The people were anxious to find out whether anyone would dare to bid for the farm. It was suspected that a certain Scotchman, one McNab, might venture to defy the popular wrath, and argument ran high about what should be done to him afterwards. McNab was, in fact, quite willing to acquire a valuable property cheap if he could; but he had very little money of his own, and was one of those to whom the bank manager had refused an advance. Still he had hopes. It was a sheriff's sale. There would be no reserve price. He gathered all the money he could lay hands on, and faced the auctioneer with a look of grim determination.

The farm was put up, "offered up," to use the phrase of the local auctioneer. The expression was suitable enough, for it seemed likely that not only the farm, but the Widow Flanagan, would be placed in the position of sacrifices, whole-burnt offerings to the unconquerable love of liberty which animates the breasts of Irishmen.

"Twenty pounds," said McNab, the Scotchman.

The crowd hissed, booed, and cursed with the utmost heartiness. Not a man present but was extremely angry at the idea of McNab acquiring for twenty pounds what everybody else was afraid

to bid for. McNab thrust his hands deep into his breeches pockets and grinned. When the noise subsided the auctioneer made himself heard:

"Any advance upon twenty pounds? Come, gentlemen, the farm's worth £300 if it's worth a penny."

"Twenty-five pounds," said a voice.

Sheer amazement at the audacity of this second bidder held the crowd silent. That McNab, a Scotchman, an outsider, a well-known contemner of all the decencies of public life, should make a bid was bad enough. That there should be another such reprobate in the neighbourhood was beyond all expectation. A whisper passed, like a summer breeze, from ear to ear. The name of the new bidder was known.

"Sweeny for ever! Cheers for Sweeny!" yelled a voice in the outskirts of the crowd, the voice of the rate-collector, Mr. Sweeny's son-in-law. The people, dimly conscious that matters of high politics were in acting, cheered obediently.

"Thirty pounds," said McNab.

"Thirty-five pounds," said Sweeny.

Another burst of cheering followed the bid. McNab turned and left the crowd. He had reached the bottom of his purse. Mr. Patrick Sweeny was duly declared the purchaser of the Widow Flanagan's farm. The crowd, with some curiosity, waited for an explanation.

Mr. Sweeny, feeling that a speech was due,



mounted the auctioneer's chair, and delivered himself:

"Fellow-countrymen! I needn't tell you, nor I needn't tell any assembly of Irishmen, that I'm no land-grabber.

"You are not," shouted the rate-collector. "We know that."

"I've stood by the Nationalist cause," said Mr. Sweeny, "the cause of old Ireland, the land of saints and scholars, since ever I learnt to stand by my mother's knee. And I mean to stand by it till every landlord and land-grabber is burning in hell, and the people of Ireland is enjoying the place, the just and lawful place, the noble and exalted place that our fathers occupied before us. Fellow-countrymen, let us gaze on the majestic figure of St. Patrick, let us do honour to the name of Wolfe Tone and the Manchester Martyrs, and—and—all the rest of the band of patriots; let us cling to the old sod. *Esto perpetua!*"

The crowd cheered frenziedly. None of them knew what *esto perpetua* meant, nor, for that matter, did Mr. Sweeny himself. But they had heard the words before, for Mr. Sweeny always used them in his speeches, and they felt that they must be great and good words; words worthy of the loudest cheers.

"I have bought this farm, but I have bought it to hold in trust for the Irish people—a sacred trust, as dear to me as my heart's blood. When the day

of liberty dawns, when the wrongs of centuries shall at last be drenched in gore, then, gentlemen, then, on that great and glorious day, I shall step proudly forward and restore to the people of Ireland Mrs. Flanagan's farm. In the meanwhile let you all subscribe liberally to the fund we're getting up for the widow and the orphan, the wounded soldiers in the war we're waging."

About ten o'clock that evening, Dr. Henaghan, hilarious and well satisfied, was shown into the room behind Mr. Sweeny's shop by Delia Flanagan, who fed the pigs.

"You did middling well to-day," he said; "I say you did middling well to-day, let the other man be who he will."

"Hold your gab," said Mr. Sweeny, "you're drunk again."

"I am not drunk, nor near drunk. I came round to get a drink out of you in honour of the success of the stratagem."

"Only for that Scotchman," growled Mr. Sweeny, "I'd have got the place for ten pound. But I'll be even with him yet."

"You will, begad, or with any other man."

"And the blasted landlord gets every penny of my money; gets thirty-five pounds out of me, all on account of that Scotchman. And the Widow Flanagan owes me money that I'll never see."

"There's the subscription they're getting up,"

said the doctor, "why can't you take that off of her?"

"I can, of course, and I will. But it won't be enough, nor near enough."

"Well, what's the good of talking? Let's have a drink, anyway."

"Delia," yelled Mr. Sweeny, "Delia Flanagan, get a quart of whiskey from the bar, and a couple of tumblers. Be quick about it now. When your old mother's washing the floors in the workhouse you'll have to be quicker at your work. I'll learn you to listen to me when I call."

## V.—FOR THE FAMINE OF YOUR HOUSES

**T**HE parish of Curraghmore, which is situated on the western coast, was smitten by a famine. Therefore, a benevolent Government decided to send the people some potatoes. Early in February, Mr. Nicholson-Croly arrived charged with the sale, on exceptionally favourable terms, of 200 tons of a new kind of potato called the May Queen.

He settled himself as comfortably as possible in the little hotel, and awaited the arrival of the potato-laden steamer. In due time she came into the bay and anchored opposite Father Gibbons' Presbytery, about a mile from the shore. Mr. Nicholson-Croly hired one of the canvas-covered boats, locally known as curraghs, and rowed off to the steamer.

"What's your plan," asked Captain MacNab, "for getting the potatoes on shore?"

"Oh, that's all right," said Mr. Nicholson-Croly. "You are to lie alongside the pier."

"What pier?"

"There's only one pier—the pier the Government built years ago."

"Well," said the Captain, looking slowly round, "where is it?"

Mr. Nicholson-Croly pointed out the structure. It was clearly visible in a corner of the bay. So



were the teeth of a long fringe of jagged rocks guarding the approach to it.

"Well, I'm——" Captain MacNab was a pious man, and stopped himself in time.

Mr. Nicholson-Croly was not a marine engineer nor a close observer of men and manners. He noticed neither the rocks nor the Captain's half-finished sentence. The pier was certainly there—grey, strong, and impressive even in the distance. He saw no reason why the steamer should not lie alongside it.

"I suppose," he said, "that you can come in some time to-morrow?"

Captain MacNab's piety failed him.

"I'll see you damned, and your Government along with you—and it's what they deserve if they built that pier—before I pile up my ship on those rocks."

"Do you mean to say that you won't go alongside the pier?"

"You may with safety take your Bible oath to it that it's exactly what I do mean," said Captain MacNab.

Mr. Nicholson-Croly went on shore, and spent the evening writing an indignant account of Captain MacNab's behaviour to the authorities in Dublin Castle. He got by return of post a card which informed him that his letter was received, its contents noted, and that a reply would be forthcoming in due course. After a week the reply arrived. The authorities were unable to understand Captain

MacNab's attitude and recommended that the facts of the case should be presented to him again. Mr. Nicholson-Croly presented them. He, as it were, formally introduced the Captain to the pier, taking him on shore for the purpose. He expatiated on the beauty of its masonry, on the cost of building it, on the parental affection which the Government naturally felt for it. Captain MacNab's determination remained unchanged, though the language in which he expressed it was modified.

Mr. Nicholson-Croly wrote a second letter to Dublin, and received a second post-card identical with the first. This time ten days elapsed before anyone found leisure to deal with the matter. Then, lest further valuable time should be wasted, some one sent a telegram:—"Adopt other means for landing potatoes."

The only other means that appeared to be available were the five canvas-covered boats used by the natives for fishing. Mr. Nicholson-Croly, with despair in his heart, consulted the priest.

"I expect now," said Father Gibbons, "that if the weather isn't too bad you might get as much as ten stone into each curragh. If you employ the whole five of them, and they make eight journeys in the day—you will hardly get them to do more than that, and, indeed, Jimmy Corcoran's an old man, and has no one to help him but his gossoon of a grandson; he'll hardly go more than four times. Still, that same would bring you——"

He drew an envelope from his pocket and worked the sum on the back of it.

"You'd get two and a quarter ton ashore in the day, as near as I can make it out."

"Why, I'd be——" said Mr. Nicholson-Croly.

He in his turn figured rapidly with knitted brow. "I'd be over two months getting the whole cargo landed."

"You would," said the priest. "All that and more, for you haven't reckoned on Sundays and holydays. Besides, the men wouldn't stick at the work for you. There'd be the spring fishing to attend to, and the ploughing. Indeed, before you'd finished there'd be the harvest to get in."

Mr. Nicholson-Croly left the priest, and went, though not hopefully, to seek advice from the police barrack. He learned there that Mr. Normanstill, who lived at Rathmore, owned a tidy bit of a boat, a boat that might carry as much as five tons of potatoes at a time. It might be—the sergeant couldn't say for certain—but it might be that she could be borrowed.

Mr. Normanstill was the land agent, who lived by collecting rent from the inhabitants of Curraghmore. He disliked Father Gibbons. He very much disliked the Government. He nourished a special grudge against the imported potato scheme, because he had not been consulted about it. Also Mr. Normanstill was a humourist. When Mr. Nicholson-Croly called to treat for the loan or hire of the boat,

he insisted on regarding the visit as a pleasant social function, and evaded all attempts to talk business. Mrs. Normanstill poured out tea. She discussed the scenery, the weather, and a new novel which Mr. Nicholson-Croly had not read. When at last the unfortunate young man propounded his potato problem, his host affected to regard it as an excellent joke, and suggested that Mr. Nicholson-Croly should swim ashore once or twice every day with a May Queen potato in his mouth. Evidently the tidy bit of a boat was not to be borrowed on any terms.

Next day the five curraghs were hired, and loaded with potatoes under a withering fire of sarcasm from Captain MacNab, echoed by his crew, who watched operations with broad grins. Father Gibbons' estimate of the capacity of the curraghs proved too high. Barely two tons of potatoes were landed before dark. Mr. Nicholson-Croly went to bed and slept uneasily, haunted by a nightmare of a whole life spent in ferrying potatoes by twos and threes across an abnormally stormy waste of water. Three days of immense toil resulted in the housing of nearly six tons of battered May Queens in a galvanised iron shed lent by Father Gibbons for purposes of sorting. After that the owners of the curraghs declined to put to sea any more. Nor would offers of increased payment, expositions of the value of the potatoes to the community, or threats



of Government vengeance, somewhat vaguely expressed, move them from their decision.

Mr. Nicholson-Croly, doing the best possible under the circumstances, prepared to sell his available stock. He established himself in the shed with a ledger, a bottle of ink, some sacks, and a package of sandwiches. The rush of buyers might, he reflected, prevent his getting away for lunch. No one came near him all the morning. About half-past twelve o'clock a small boy arrived and stared through the open door. Mr. Nicholson-Croly, who was beginning to find the hut draughty, sent him to the hotel to fetch two rugs. He wrapped his legs up, ate his sandwiches, lit a pipe, and waited. At four o'clock Father Gibbons looked in and inquired how his sale was going on. He expressed surprise at learning that no single May Queen had been disposed of.

"Maybe now," he said, "the people don't know you're selling them. They very well might, of course, considering that the whole parish has been talking of nothing but the way you got the cargo landed. Still it's surprising, sometimes, the things people won't know. It would be as well, perhaps, if I warned them on Sunday after Mass where the potatoes are to be had."

The next Sunday Father Gibbons very kindly announced that the potatoes were on sale in his galvanised iron shed, adding that intending buyers should be prompt, because the supply was limited.

On Monday no single individual visited the shed. On Tuesday Captain MacNab looked in to inquire when the rest of his cargo would be landed.

"Of course," he said, "it's nothing to me when you land them. I'd just as soon spend the spring here as anywhere else; but I'd be getting them ashore if I were you. I've a sort of suspicion that some of them are beginning to go bad."

Early in the following week, Mr. Normanstill drove up to the shed.

"I looked in as I passed," he said, cheerfully, "to see if you were worn out selling those potatoes. It must be hard work. I shouldn't wonder, now, if you'd be the better of a holiday."

"I'm not worn out with selling potatoes," said Mr. Nicholson-Croly, bitterly. "I haven't sold a single stone, and so far as I can see, I'm not likely to. I can't understand it."

"Do you tell me that?" said Mr. Normanstill. "It's most extraordinary. Did you ask Father Gibbons why you couldn't sell them?"

"He can't understand it any more than I can."

"Oh, he can't understand it!" Mr. Normanstill grinned. "Do you know, it occurs to me that maybe the people are holding off in expectation of the second cargo."

"What second cargo?"

"Do you mean to tell me you don't know? Well, you must be the only man in the whole country who doesn't. Why, man, the gentlemen who came down

to arrange about the potatoes said they were going to send another two hundred tons for free distribution among those who hadn't money to buy any of the first lot. Every soul in the place knew that six weeks ago, and no man would be such a fool as to buy to-day what he'll get for nothing to-morrow."

Captain MacNab was the next visitor to the shed. He appeared to be in a very bad temper.

"Sir," he said, "I've come to tell you that unless you take those infernal potatoes out of my ship I'll dump the whole cargo of them into the sea. They've gone rotten, sir. They stink, stink so that the toughest man on board can't go below without puking. I might as well sleep in a sewer as my cabin.

Poor Mr. Nicholson-Croly succumbed to this last blow.

"I can't help it," he said, piteously. "God knows I wish the potatoes and the Government and Father Gibbons and Mr. Normanstill and the whole parish were all at the bottom of the sea together."

"Well," said the Captain, "I'll see that the potatoes get there anyhow. You can look after the drowning of the rest of the party yourself."

That night Mr. Nicholson-Croly was rowed on board in one of the ship's boats. Steam was got up after dark, and at about two o'clock in the morning, three miles from the shore, one hundred and ninety-four tons of exceedingly malodorous potatoes were shovelled into the Atlantic. At daylight the steamer was again at her old anchorage, where

Captain MacNab and his crew awaited the further orders in a comparatively pure atmosphere. A letter, marked "private and urgent," ordered the steamer back to her native port, and directed Mr. Nicholson-Croly to impress upon the Captain and crew the absolute necessity for silence.

The next two hundred tons of "May Queens" were sent to Curraghmore by rail, and Mr. Nicholson-Croly had the satisfaction of handing them over, free of charge, to people who grumbled a good deal because they were "a poor, soft kind of potato," and certain to "rot on us in the ground."



## VI.—FUNDAMENTAL SOCIOLOGY.

**I**T must be regarded for many reasons as unfortunate that Mrs. Crossley, the Archdeacon's wife, had no children. The lot of her husband's parishioners would have been pleasanter, and the Archdeacon himself would have been spared a great deal of anxiety and worry if there had been eight or ten young Crossleys. The lady herself would have been much happier, because she would have escaped the heartbreak of discovering the vanity of human enthusiasms.

Mrs. Crossley was vigorous and energetic. No one had ever known her rest from the effort to accomplish some great work. Once she was smitten with a wish to eliminate drunkenness from among the scourges which afflict humanity. She argued, most logically, that if everyone were a total abstainer there would be no drunkards, and having reached this conclusion, set about persuading and coercing people into signing pledges. A women's temperance guild, consisting for the most part of the wives and daughters of dissenting ministers, welcomed an Archdeacon's wife as a valuable recruit, and she was promptly elected president. For two years she preached her crusade to rather scanty audiences in Methodist and Presbyterian

chapels, and her husband was worried by other Archdeacons with strong Church principles and peaceable wives. Afterwards she took to drinking a bottle of porter in the middle of the day, and looking after the manners, morals, and health of the curate and the organist. She walked into their lodgings at inconvenient hours of the day and night, gave them excellent advice when they were well; entangled them both in matrimonial engagements, and doctored them when she thought they looked harassed or pale. This also was a cause of considerable annoyance to the Archdeacon. The two young men wearied her at length by their ingratitude, and she passed from them to the production of beautiful furniture. There is a kind of art called Dutch Marquetrie work, which consists of staining squares, circles, and stars on white wood, and afterwards making the whole surface sticky with a varnish composed of turpentine and other ingredients. The wood thus treated can afterwards be made into small tables and fragile stools very exquisite to look at. Mrs. Crossley created large numbers of these, and laid the Archdeacon's books on them. It was after she had exhausted the possibilities of artistic endeavour that she fell under the spell of physical culture. She did exercises with pulleys, discarded garments she had always been accustomed to, and gave up her bottle of stout. She became unpopular with the younger women because she inveighed against their favourite clothes, and with

men by urging them, unnecessarily and insultingly as they thought, to take baths. People became shy of calling at the rectory after she insisted on teaching a bank clerk to breathe, laying him flat on his back on the drawing-room floor for the purpose. This misguided boy believed that he could breathe well enough for all practical purposes before the lesson.

Mrs. Crossley was still a comparatively young woman when she read a book about the way the poor live in York. She was fascinated by the budgets of weekly expenditure, the statistics about the number of people who slept in one bedroom, and the dirt and disease consequent on insufficient water supply. She ransacked library catalogues for more books of the same kind, and for weeks feasted her soul on detailed descriptions of common lodging-houses, casual labour-homes, and institutions called "shelters." She acquired quite easily a taste for sordidness, and began to yearn to extend her knowledge by experimental investigation. She came to the conclusion that she was studying a science called sociology, and was, above all things, anxious that her knowledge of it should be fundamental. The word had always been a favourite one with her. She had flung it at the heads of people who would not sign pledges, and her devotion to it was responsible for the insult to the bank clerk. Combined with a really splendid noun like sociology it afforded her intense satisfaction. "Physical cul-

ture " had been a good phrase in its day, and " artistic handicraft " not without its inspiration, but " fundamental sociology " surpassed them both.

For a long time she hesitated over the choice of a field for her investigations. She desired to be original—to scan some kind of life hitherto shrouded from public view. It was also essential that sordid details should reward her pains, and that she should come face to face with the sort of things which are only hinted at in print. She cherished a golden hope of posing afterwards as the guardian angel, the Elizabeth Fry, of some class of pariahs.

It was while walking home from the harbour one afternoon in early spring that the great idea flashed upon her. It happened to be the day on which the steamer sails from Ardnamore to Glasgow, and she met a crowd of rough country girls on their way to embark. She knew very well what they were and where they were going. They came from the poorer parts of the country, inland; from among the mountains and the bogs where holdings of land are small, and it is impossible for a family to get a living. Therefore, young men and women, often old men, too, go off to Scotland and England, there to work in the fields for six months of the year, and to live—— It was at this point that Mrs. Crossley became really interested. How did they live? Once as a girl she had spent a week with some friends in a house they had rented on the western shores of the island of Bute. She remembered a Scottish



farmer coming to them one evening and asking them if they would care to go round to his place and see the Irish. She had a very vivid recollection of the scene which he displayed to them. A large fire burned in the middle of his yard, and round it were clustered the savages from her native land, cooking their food, drying their clothes, and talking to each other in unintelligible Gaelic. They took no notice of the staring tourist group, behaving with a contempt for their curiosity which reminded her of the nobler kinds of animals in zoological gardens.

She looked at a second group of girls with more interest. It occurred to her that it would be intensely exciting to discover how they lived in Scotland. She recollected having heard that they went from one farm to another in gangs; all slept together in barns, and lived for months with no change of clothes but what the little bundles in their hands contained. She saw in these girls the very field for investigation she desired. No one had ever before sounded the depths of harvesting. She scented disgusting details, half hoped for the unspeakable, and foresaw the blaze of triumph in which she would make her revelations to the public. No doubt, later on, when the conditions of their servitude were ameliorated—Mrs. Crossley had adopted the habit of thinking in long words—her work would be recognised, and all Connaught would hail her as a heroine.

Recollecting her great phrase, she determined to be as fundamental as possible in her study of this interesting branch of sociology. She herself would become, for a week, or a month if necessary, a harvester. On her way home she ordered a rough tweed skirt to reach a little above her ankles; a blue serge bodice; a shawl for her shoulders, and two large red handkerchiefs—one to cover her head, the other to carry her change of clothes. She also bought two pairs of the roughest knitted stockings, thick boots, and—this was, indeed, fundamental,—an irreducible minimum of cheap flannelette under-clothing. This she felt must be the proper outfit; but to complete her fitness for her task, she called on the woman who supplied her with milk, and learnt from a servant girl the Irish for “God bless you.”

One great difficulty presented itself as the day of the steamer's departure drew near. She feared that if she walked through the streets of Ardnamore in her new costume a crowd would follow her, and she would be made to appear ridiculous. The Arch-deacon might, of course, drive her to the quay in the carriage, and escort her, heavily cloaked, on board the steamer. But she disliked taking him into her confidence. He would be certain to oppose her plan. Besides, it would be hardly fair to ask his help. It was one thing for an Archdeacon afterwards to bask in the reflected glory of a wife who had proved her eminence as a fundamental sociol-

ogist—quite another thing for him to lend the countenance of gaiters and apron to a lady in a skirt of extreme brevity and a head handkerchief. To add to her perplexity the steamer sailed in the glaring publicity of three o'clock in the afternoon.

The plan which suggested itself in the end was ingenious. She made up her harvesting clothes into a brown paper parcel, and walked to the steamer in her ordinary costume, timing herself to arrive two hours before it sailed. She planned to change her clothes in the cabin before any of the harvesting girls arrived. There was only one drawback. She would be obliged to conceal her dress and hat somewhere, and might never be able to recover them. But, then, no great work can be accomplished without some sacrifice. On her way down she posted a letter to the Archdeacon explaining her plans fully. She knew that it would not be delivered until she was far out of reach of expostulation.

She approached an officer who was blasphemously assisting in the embarkation of some bullocks, and asked him for the harvesters' cabin.

"Bless my soul, ma'am, the company doesn't provide cabins for the likes of them."

"But the women, my good man. You don't mean to say that the women spend the whole night on deck?"

It appeared, however, that they did. Mrs. Crossley was seriously embarrassed. The prospect of a

chilly and exceedingly uncomfortable night daunted her very little; but the impossibility of changing her clothes in public was obvious.

"Will you kindly direct me," she said, "to the ladies' cabin? I mean that reserved for first-class passengers."

The officer, whose temper was being tried by the bullocks, told her, with unnecessary emphasis, that the steamer did not carry first-class passengers, and had no ladies' cabin of any sort. Mrs. Crossley was a determined woman. She reflected that there must be some place on the steamer sufficiently screened from public view for her purpose. She went in search of it. Under the main deck, she discovered a similar enclosure, empty, shut off from the after portion of the ship by a whitewashed wooden partition about six feet high. It seemed, if not an ideal ladies' dressing-room, at least free from any observation, except that of the neighbouring cattle. She unpacked her parcel, and laid the garments ready at her feet. She divested herself of her hat and jacket. She unfastened her blouse. Then she was startled by a sudden sound of hoofs trampling down the narrow passage which led to her refuge. She looked round. A bullock came rushing, as it seemed furiously, with lowered head. For a moment the creature hesitated, not unnaturally, for he could not have expected to come face to face with a lady in the act of undressing; then, urged by the horns of his fellows behind, and



the sound of sticks and curses not far off, he plunged forward. But Mrs. Cassidy had not hesitated at all. Leaving her harvesting outfit, and even her own proper hat and jacket to be trampled or horned, she made a leap to grasp the top of the whitewashed partition. Then her physical culture proved its value. She dragged herself to comparative safety. But the top of a wooden partition is not comfortable, nor was the attitude she was forced to adopt one in which an archdeacon's wife ought to be seen even by a bullock. She cast one regretful look towards the clothes, which already were under the feet of the cattle, and dropped on the iron place outside the engine-room door. Fortunately the engineer was engaged with an oil-can somewhere in the bowels of his machinery.

Nothing at this stage of her adventure prevented Mrs. Crossley's immediate return to the rectory, except the recollection of the letter she had posted to the Archdeacon. It was written, she remembered, in very noble language. She had expatiated upon lofty aims; upon the glory of the strenuous life; upon the value of fundamental sociology. She had not spared hints of her contempt for the easy and monotonous existence led by Church dignitaries. In the evening the letter would be delivered, and there was no possibility of intercepting it. No self-respecting woman could face the situation. The Archdeacon was not a man with a keen sense of humour, but even he—— Mrs. Crossley quivered

with shame and indignation. It would be better to perish as a martyr—better certainly to voyage to Glasgow without a hat—than to return to a home darkened with the shadow of an unquenchable joke.

She did not emerge from her hiding-place until the steamer started.

She found the girls and men, for whose sake she had attempted the adventure, assembled in the waist of the ship. Under the fore-deck were piled packing-cases and great bales of wool. In the shelter of the after-deck were the bullocks—creatures fortunate in having owners who could sue the company if harm came of exposure during the voyage. Between the wool and the bullocks on the open deck were the harvesters. Some sat chatting, with their backs against the bulwarks. Another group was gathered round a foreseeing boy who had brought a melodeon, and prepared to dance. Others had opened their bundles, and spread food on the deck in front of them. It was uninviting enough—lumps of yellow cake made in the cabin pot-ovens from strong flour; thick soft biscuits, with currants dotted here and there in them; and a few oranges; but the sight of it reminded Mrs. Crossley that she had started before luncheon, and that the steamer took twenty hours to reach Glasgow. Apart from the others stood two girls, who looked wistfully back to the hills they were leaving, and sang softly a plaintive song in Irish. Mrs. Crossley felt that these would be admirable subjects for her

first experiment in fundamental sociology. She assured herself that she recollected her Irish phrase, and approached them:

"Gu manny dear hitch," she said, slowly and distinctly.

The girls stopped singing and stared at her. One of them had boisterous red hair and a very freckled face. The other looked anæmic.

"Gu manny dear hitch," repeated Mrs. Crossley, still more distinctly. She addressed herself specially to the anæmic girl, for the other looked very wild.

"She has not the Beurla—the English; and I myself have very little."

It was the red-haired girl that answered her.

Mrs. Crossley realised that something must have gone wrong with her Irish pronunciation, and blamed, quite unjustly, the milk-woman's servant. She turned, intending to try one of the other groups, but the steamer, which had passed out of the shelter of Ardnamore Bay, pitched heavily. She found herself starting at a rapid trot across the deck, and then, with barely time to turn around, trotting still more rapidly back again. The red-haired girl started forward and caught her just in time to prevent a headlong charge against the bulwarks.

"It will be better with you sitting down," she said.

Mrs. Crossley admitted that it would be very much better, and allowed herself to be deposited on the deck. The two girls talked eagerly together;

but, except a frequent repetition of words which sounded like "van oozele," she could catch nothing of what they said. Very soon she did not wish to listen or understand. The ship continued to pitch, and a quite intolerable nausea rendered her more wretched than she had ever been before. She gave up the effort to sit upright, and lay prone on the deck. Even in this attitude it became impossible to remain still. As the steamer rolled and plunged she began to roll helplessly from side to side. The anæmic girl sat down on the deck and took the poor lady's head upon her lap. For a long time she lay in a state of comatose misery, waking at last to consciousness of her surroundings with a feeling of damp and cold. It had begun to rain. The steamer was pitching worse than ever, and salt spray joined with the rain in wetting her. She saw that a group of girls had gathered round, and stood swaying sickeningly with the motion of the ship. She heard again the constant repetition of the words "van oozele." Then one of the girls bent over her:

"Is there cold on you, mistress?"

There was, intense cold, but Mrs. Crossley could not say so because of the nausea that came on her afresh. She did the next best thing. She shivered piteously. Then she became suddenly aware that the girl who held her head was also abominably seasick. There was a convulsion, during which she sincerely hoped for a sudden death, and then her head bumped heavily on the deck. In a moment



the red-haired girl was down beside her and raised her head.

"It will be better to you if you eat," said one of the girls, and knelt beside her. Mrs. Crossley shuddered helplessly, but could not protest. The girl took an orange from her bundle, bit a large piece off one side, and held the remainder to Mrs. Crossley's lips. The steamer gave a very violent plunge, and the orange was jammed against her mouth, with the weight of a falling girl behind it. The juice trickled over her chin and down her neck. With a convulsive effort she turned her head away.

"It is cold that is on the lady," repeated the girl who had made this discovery first. Several shawls were stripped off, and in a minute or two she was swathed from neck to foot. A faint sense of warmth stole over her. It rained more heavily, and the spray swept across the deck in sheets. The red-haired girl stretched her shawl over her own head and Mrs. Crossley's, making a kind of tent. She stooped low and tucked the two ends of it under her. Then she pressed her rough hands on Mrs. Crossley's forehead.

After this came another period of miserable semi-consciousness. When she woke again it was to feel the tenting shawl suddenly snatched away. The red-haired girl had also succumbed to seasickness. Mrs. Crossley feared that her head would be again deposited on the deck. It was pitch-dark, and no one would see her or rescue her. She foresaw that

she would roll across the wet deck, and go on rolling until some merciful blow put an end to life and misery. But the red-haired girl proved herself a heroine. Through her worst spasms she clung to the head, and even at intervals during the night restored the tent.

In the morning, when the steamer entered the comparatively calm waters of the Firth of Clyde, Mrs. Crossley began to revive a little. The desire to live returned to her when passing Wemyss Bay. She disentangled herself from the enveloping shawls, and tried to stand on her feet. It did not surprise her to find that she was weak and shaken. Her protectress made her sit down again, and offered her a slice of bread and an orange. Mrs. Crossley ate the bread hungrily; but the thought of the orange was bitter to her, on account of the stickiness of her neck. She would cheerfully have given a pound for a cup of tea, but no such thing was available. However, the bread gave her back strength and sufficient spirit to be anxious about her personal appearance. Thanks to the shawls in which she had been wrapped, her clothes had suffered nothing worse than a crumpling; but her hair hung down about her shoulders, tangled and wet, and of all the hairpins with which she had started only one remained. By careful searching, in which all the harvesters, men and women, took part, four were recovered from corners of the deck. The girls subscribed five more from their own heads, and

Mrs. Crossley, with the help of a borrowed comb, regained a measure of self-respect.

Curiously enough, as it seemed to her, the girls all left her when they could be of no further help. They had sheltered her, nursed her, clothed her, even tried to feed her in the night, when she was helpless. Several of them were wet to the skin, because they had given her their shawls. Others had parted with valuable hairpins in her hour of need. But now, when, as she conceived, her friendship would be an honour and her conversation a privilege, they all shrank from her, incurably shy. After passing Greenock the harvesters gathered into a group, and engaged in what seemed to her an animated debate. When it was over an elderly man, of patriarchal and benevolent appearance, approached her.

"May I be so bold as to speak a word to your ladyship?" he said.

Mrs. Crossley graciously signified her willingness to listen.

"It isn't for the likes of me to be advising you; but I'm an old man, and I've seen a deal of life, being across in America when I was a boy. Sure it will be better for your ladyship to go back to him."

Mrs. Crossley gazed at him in amazement.

"Isn't it you that is the Archdeacon's lady? Many's the time I've seen him in the big town, when I was there for a fair or such like. A fine man he

is, God bless him. Indeed now, if he does be a bit foolish at times, and a bad head to you—not that I ever heard that same of him, but your ladyship knows best—isn't it what many a woman has to put up with? and God is good. Indeed now they say, saving your ladyship's presence, that many a time it's the woman's own fault when a man takes a drop too much; and maybe now it would only be at the Christmas or on a fair day. There's plenty wouldn't touch the drink at all only for the way things is carried on at home, not that I'd think it of your ladyship. But, faith, you'd be better going back to him. Musha, God is good."

Mrs. Crossley realised slowly that her fellow-passengers gave her credit for running away from the Archdeacon; that they supposed that the good man had taken to drink; that they suspected her of having driven him to it.



## VII.—MATTY HYNES' FIG.

THE inhabitants of the Island of Inishbee, which lies off the coast of Connaught, objected to paying the rate levied on their lands, quite lawfully, by the county authorities. The sum was not large. A moderately rich man would have written a cheque for the whole of it without hesitation. It amounted in all to £2 7s. 4d. There were three families on Inishbee, and the amount due by them varied from £1 15s. 1d., payable by Thomas Geraghty, to 3s. 2d., the share of the poorest of his two cousins. It was not the ruinous amount of the impost which led to the strike against payment. The Geraghtys took their stand on a principle, or rather on two principles. In the first place, they were free islanders, and objected to paying anything, rate, rent, or tax, to anybody. In the second place, they maintained, with great justice, that they derived no benefit whatever from the way in which the county rates were spent. Roads and bridges were repaired elsewhere. There were no roads or bridges on their island. Workhouses were kept open for the reception of the indigent. No paupers went to them from Inishbee. The salaries of dispensary doctors were paid that the poor might be cured of their diseases. None of the Geraghtys of Inishbee were ever ill.

The fourteen young Geraghtys who rejoiced the hearts of three pairs of parents had all struggled into the world without medical assistance. The people on the mainland might levy rates on themselves if they liked, and squander the money on useless luxuries. The three families on Inishbee got on very well without roads, workhouses, or doctors, and saw no reason why they should pay for what they neither had nor wanted.

Matty Hynes took quite a different view of the matter. It was his business to collect the rates. He had, ultimately, to pay over the whole sum levied into the banking account of the County Council. If he failed to collect the contribution due by any particular householder he suffered the loss himself. When the people of Inishbee refused to pay, Matty Hynes was £2 7s. 4d. poorer than he ought to have been. He disliked losing the money. He disliked still more the feeling that the three families of Geraghtys were robbing him. He, too, waiving the consideration of the smallness of the sum in dispute, took his stand on principle. The money was due, and what is due must, if society is to survive, be paid. He put this view of the matter before the Geraghtys, but they were not affected by it. Their position remained unchanged.

The law provides the rate-collector with a weapon against defaulters. It allows him to seize their property and sell it by public auction, satisfying his claim out of the proceeds of the sale. The Geraghtys

owned property. They had on their island four bullocks, a cow, two sows, and seven small pigs. Matty Hynes, driven at last to extremities, resolved to seize some or all of these animals. He knew that the Geraghtys would offer all the resistance in their power, so he called on the police officer of the locality and demanded his assistance.

Mr. Benson, the District Inspector of Police, was a young man with the feelings of a gentleman, and a natural dislike for tax-collectors. He was a sportsman, and rather admired the stand made by the Geraghtys. But he was also an officer, pledged to the maintenance of law and order. He felt himself forced to accede to the request made by Matty Hynes.

"I suppose," he said, with a note of sarcasm in his voice, "that four constables and the sergeant will be enough to overawe the Geraghtys?"

"They will, surely," said Matty Hynes, adding as an after-thought, "if so be we had them there."

Mr. Benson was new to the west of Ireland. There seemed to him no reason why the men should not be taken to Inishbee in a boat. The island was only two miles distant from the mainland. He said as much to Matty Hynes.

"You might take them in a boat," said Matty, "if so be you had the boat."

There were five boats in the little harbour at Ballymore; stout fishing-boats, each of them able to carry four constables, a sergeant, Mr. Benson,

Matty Hynes, and a couple of bailiffs. They belonged to men who were continually grumbling about the difficulty of earning money. It seemed obvious to Mr. Benson that any one of them would be glad to hire his boat for a reasonable sum. Matty Hynes was an older man than Mr. Benson, and had spent his whole life in Connaught. He was not sure that any boat would be available.

Mr. Benson, prompt in action as befits a man in his profession, walked down to the harbour. He found the whole five boats-owners leaning over a wall. They were studying the sky with a view to being able to foretell the weather. They were also smoking pipes. Mr. Benson greeted them cheerily.

"Boys," he said, "will any of you hire me a boat for a day?"

There was a stir of surprise and pleasurable anticipation among the men. The hiring of a boat is a very rare thing in Ballymore.

"If it's for the coal-fish that your honour's going out," said Peter Reilly, the oldest of the fishermen, "the tide will be right tomorrow afternoon."

"I've no time for fishing," said Mr. Benson. "I want to go to Inishbee."

"You might do that," said Peter Reilly, "if you had the wind. But there's no wind. You'd need four men to row that length."

"I'll have the police," said Mr. Benson.

The fishermen looked at one another doubtfully.



No man in Ireland cares to be mixed up with the police if he can help it.

"Is it a still you're after?" said Peter Reilly. "For if it is——"

Everybody sympathizes with the illicit distiller. The trade is highly beneficial to a public which appreciates cheap spirits. Mr. Benson had knowledge enough of the minds of the people to protest at once that he had no intention of seizing a still. Peter Reilly looked round his friends with a slow, searching gaze. His eyes left them and rested on Mr. Benson. Then, passing Mr. Benson, they surveyed the road which led to the harbour. Matty Hynes stood about fifty yards up the road, watching for Benson. Peter Reilly saw him and understood at once what the boat was wanted for.

"If it's to seize the Geraghtys' beasts," he said, "that you're wanting to go to Inishbee, you'll get no boat."

"And why not?" said Mr. Benson.

"Because they'd have it smashed to bits on you with the stones they'd be pelting into her. Believe you me, your honour, them Geraghtys in Inishbee is terrible wild. Thomas is the worst of them. He'd think very little of knocking a hole the size of your head in a boat if he had it in his mind that she was after him to be doing harm. It'll be better for you to leave them fellows alone. What's the loss of the money to Matty Hynes? He can afford it. We'd be willing to oblige your honour in the matter of a

day's fishing or the like, but as for giving out a boat to Matty Hynes, and getting her hammered into bits by them playboys beyond in Inishbee, it's what we wouldn't do."

There was a murmur of assent from the other fishermen. Peter Reilly had given expression to their feelings. Mr. Benson left the quay and walked up toward the town. On the way he met Matty Hynes.

"Did you get the boat?" said Matty.

"I did not."

"I was thinking you wouldn't. They're a poor-spirited lot, them fellows that owns the boats."

"I wish you and your rate were at the bottom of the sea together," said Mr. Benson. "What do you want to make all this fuss for over a matter of a couple of pounds?"

"It's yourself that'll have to help me to get it," said Matty, "whether you like it or not."

"I know that," said Mr. Benson.

"Without we was to swim," said Matty, meditatively, "I know of no way we'll get the police and the bailiffs out to Inishbee except the one. We'd be hard set to swim there," he added, "seeing it's a good two miles. And when it came to swimming back with maybe a couple of bullocks along with us——"

"Talk sense," said Mr. Benson, "and tell me what you want me to do now."

"I don't see what there is to do," said Matty, "barring a gunboat."

Mr. Benson started, and meditated a flat rejection of a proposal hardly less absurd to his mind than the idea of swimming. Then he recollected that on other occasions, in other places along the western Irish coast, the ships of his Majesty's navy had been employed on similar errands. He went home and wrote a letter to his superior officer. That gentleman, in turn, wrote to some one else. Many letters passed between the police authorities in Dublin Castle, the Local Government Board, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, and the Admiralty. The whole correspondence, when collected, filed, and submitted to the Lord-Lieutenant, made an imposing bundle of foolscap.

Three weeks later H.M. gunboat *Curlew* steamed out of Queenstown Harbor. Lieutenant Eckersley, who commanded her, was in a very bad temper. He did not want to voyage round the coasts of Kerry and battle his way northward through the Atlantic. He wanted to stay in Queenstown and take part in a lawn-tennis tournament which he had helped to organise. He disliked the prospect of feeling his way to an unknown anchorage off the town of Ballymore. The Connaught coast has a bad reputation among sailors. There are hidden rocks in unexpected places, tides which sweep violently along, and an almost total absence of buoys, lights and other aids to navigation. The

crew of the *Curlew* shared their commander's irritation. Every man of them had his own ties in Queenstown. There were agreeable young women there. It seemed unlikely that there would be any young women in Ballymore. If they had known the name of Matty Hynes these men would have cursed him. They had never heard of him, and so they cursed Mr. Benson, who was not really to blame. Curiously enough, neither they nor Lieutenant Eckersley cursed the people of Inishbee. It was felt in the gunboat that these unhappy islanders were the victims of official fussiness. So were the sailors. Their common sufferings created a bond of sympathy between them.

At about seven o'clock on a very fine evening the *Curlew* cast anchor outside Ballymore Harbour. Inishbee lay to the west, a low, black patch against the setting sun. Lieutenant Eckersley surveyed it through his glasses and sighed. Then he turned and surveyed the town. It looked exceedingly uninteresting. He sighed again. A fishing-boat stole out of the harbour, her brown sail boomed out to catch the easterly breeze. She was followed by another and then another. All five fishing-boats left the harbour. This was a very unusual thing; for the Ballymore fishermen seldom fish, except in the early spring when the mackerel visit the coast. Lieutenant Eckersley knew enough of the ways of Connaught fishermen to feel surprised at the appearance of the fleet. He remarked on it an hour



later when he visited Mr. Benson. Then he got to business.

"What time do you and your party intend to start tomorrow?" he asked.

"The earlier the better," said Mr. Benson. "All I want is to get the job over,"

"Eight o'clock?"

"Very well. I'll have my men at the quay at eight."

"You quite understand, of course," said Lieutenant Eckersley, "that I and my men take no part in the proceedings. We're simply there as spectators."

"For the matter of that," said Mr. Benson, "I and my men don't either. We look on, unless we're obliged to afford protection to the rate-collector and the bailiffs."

"Oh," said Lieutenant Eckersley, "I thought you police——"

"You were wrong then," said Mr. Benson.

He felt strongly on the subject of the dignity of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and was inclined to resent the tone taken by the naval officer. Lieutenant Eckersley said no more at the time; but later in the evening, speaking to one of his subordinates, he referred to Mr. Benson and his men as "beastly bobbies." So it happened that the party which met next morning on the deck of the *Curlew* was not a comfortably assorted one. Lieutenant Eckersley and his officers held aloof from Mr. Benson. The sailors showed by their manner that they regarded

the police as their inferiors. The police stood as far as possible apart from Matty Hynes, who wore no uniform of any kind. Matty Hynes, on his part, asserted his dignity by refusing to speak to the two bailiffs whom he had brought with him.

Inishbee, when the gunboat reached it, presented a curiously deserted appearance. There was not a man, woman, or child to be seen. No smoke issued from the chimneys of the three cottages. Neither the cow nor a single one of the four bullocks was visible in the fields. Lieutenant Eckersley was so far moved by the unusual appearance of desolation that he crossed the deck and spoke to Mr. Benson.

"Do you want to land?" he asked. "There doesn't appear to be man or beast on the island."

Mr. Benson told the sergeant to summon Matty Hynes. Matty, putting his pipe in his pocket, joined the two officers.

"Do you want to land?" asked Mr. Benson. "There doesn't seem to be anything for you to seize."

"Unless you propose to carry off the island itself," said Lieutenant Eckersley.

"They have them hid on me," said Matty Hynes. "Hell to their souls! but they have them hid in some hole or other. I'll land, of course. Them Geraghtys is beyond anything for their tricks. They'd steal the coat off your back and you looking at them."

Lieutenant Eckersley gave an order, and two

boats were lowered. He himself, moved by curiosity, went in one of them, accompanied by Mr. Benson and three of the police. The other two police, Matty Hynes, and the bailiffs, were landed by the second boat.

"Now," said Mr. Benson, "off with you, Matty, and find your cattle."

"I'll not go a step," said Matty Hynes, "without you and the police along with me. I'd be in dread of them Geraghtys. They might be waiting somewhere unknown to me with sticks and stones and all sorts ready in their hands, or maybe worse. My life wouldn't be safe among them."

"I think I'll come too," said Lieutenant Eckersley, lighting a cigarette.

The possibility of a skirmish between the police and a force of ambushed Geraghtys excited him. The party proceeded cautiously toward the nearest cottage. Three of the police marched in front with their carbines in their hands. Matty Hynes and the bailiffs followed them. Then came Mr. Benson and the remaining police. Lieutenant Eckersley, with his cigarette, followed about five yards behind. The house was empty. So was the pigsty which stood beside it. Matty Hynes and the bailiffs examined the whole premises carefully.

"They'll be waiting for me beyond," he said, "wherever it is they have the beasts hid, and I'll trouble you, Mr. Benson, to see that no harm comes to me and the bailiffs. They're murdering villains,

them Geraghtys. I wouldn't trust them not to have some kind of a trap laid for us."

The little army proceeded in the same order to the second house. Here the search was more successful. Matty Hynes came upon a small pig which was rooting cheerfully in the manure heap before the door.

"You may seize that fellow, anyway," said Matty. "We'll get the rest of the beasts further on."

One of the bailiffs made a grab at the pig and missed it. It was a small and active pig. It ran to the far end of the manure heap and then stopped and looked at the bailiff.

"Catch it, can't you?" said Matty Hynes.

Both the bailiffs tried, but the pig escaped again. It was accustomed to being chased by the Geraghty children, and thoroughly understood the game. It grunted with delight as it eluded the bailiffs. Mr. Benson, Lieutenant Eckersley, and the police grinned.

"You may leave him alone," said Matty Hynes. "I wouldn't be bothered taking the like of him. I'll go on till I find where they have the cattle hid."

The third and largest house was Thomas Geraghty's. A voice issued from the door as the party approached it.

"Mind yourselves now," said Matty Hynes. "They'll be out for blood this day."

The police grasped their carbines. Mr. Benson straightened himself. Lieutenant Eckersley lit a



fresh cigarette. Matty Hynes approached the door cautiously. A long speech uttered in a shrill, quavering shriek greeted him.

"What's that?" said Lieutenant Eckersley. "It sounds to me like a woman's voice."

"She's talking Irish," said Mr. Benson. "What's she saying, Matty?"

"So far as she's got up to now," said Matty, "she's done nothing but curse, but I'm just after asking her where they have the cattle hid."

"Who is she?" said Mr. Benson.

"She's Thomas Geraghty's mother," said Matty, "that's been bedridden these ten years, and hasn't the right use of her legs."

She had, apparently, the full use of her tongue. Lieutenant Eckersley, who was standing near the door, ventured the opinion that she was still cursing.

"She is not," said Matty, "but she's telling me that every beast on the island was took ashore last night and left in Peter Reilly's field, the way I wouldn't be able to get at them."

"I wouldn't be surprised," said Mr. Benson, "if she was telling you the truth."

"Ask her," said Lieutenant Eckersley, "if it was the fishing-boats from Ballymore that landed the cattle for them last night."

"If it was," said Matty Hynes, "she'd have more sense than to tell me."

"In any case," said Mr. Benson, "we may as well be going home."

"I'll take the young pig that's beyond with me, anyway," said Matty Hynes.

The pig, trusting apparently to his powers of escape, had scorned to conceal himself. He was still rooting in the manure heap when the party returned to his home. This time Matty Hynes made careful plans for his capture. He and the two bailiffs approached the manure heap from three different directions and closed in slowly on their prey. The pig, with contempt in his eye, waited until they were quite near him, and then bolted unexpectedly past Matty Hynes. He had, the night before, successfully evaded capture when chased by all the fishermen from Ballymore, the three Geraghtys, and the fourteen children. He felt perfectly confident of being able to escape from Matty Hynes and the two bailiffs. But Matty was a crafty and determined man. Perhaps, also, the pig was overconfident. After a chase which lasted half an hour, he was hemmed into a corner between his sty and the wall of the house. There seemed no way of escape. Every rush for freedom ended in failure, and the rushes got shorter each time, as the bailiffs and Matty closed in. Lieutenant Eckersley, greatly excited, followed Matty closely, and peered over his shoulder to see the end. Matty stooped and grasped the pig round the neck. Then an unexpected thing happened. The pig made a furious rush between Matty's legs. He clung to its neck, but he tottered backward, tripped over Lieutenant

Eckersley, and fell, still clinging tightly to the pig. Lieutenant Eckersley also fell.

The double accident happened in a particularly dirty corner of the yard in front of the cottage. When Lieutenant Eckersley got up his beautiful uniform was covered with mud from the collar of his coat to the bottom of his trousers. He swore. Mr. Benson grinned feebly. He did not want to grin, but he did. The police sergeant giggled and then choked. The other members of the force also giggled. Lieutenant Eckersley swore again. Matty Hynes, on the other hand, got up in a very good temper. He was not wearing a beautiful uniform, and he had the pig safe. The police sergeant, repenting of his giggle, pulled a handful of straw out of the thatch of the cottage, and set to work to wipe the mud off Lieutenant Eckersley.

"I'm ready to go home now, any time," said Matty Hynes, hugging the pig. "If I can't get a decent price for him I'll buy him in myself and keep him till he's fat."

"If you think," said Lieutenant Eckersley, "that I'm going to turn the *Curlew* into a cattle boat to carry your filthy pigs, you're making a big mistake."

"It's joking you are," said Matty Hynes.

"I'll soon show you whether I'm joking. You can either leave that pig behind you, or stay with him yourself, for you'll not bring him on board my boat."

Matty Hynes looked helplessly at Mr. Benson.

"I'm here," said Lieutenant Eckersley, "to bring you and your bailiffs to this island, and then fetch you home again. There isn't a word in my orders about carrying pigs. It's against all the regulations, and I won't do it."

"He has you there, Matty," said Mr. Benson. "You may just as well drop that pig."

On the way home Lieutenant Eckersley, having changed his uniform and regained his self-respect, asked a question of Mr. Benson.

"Would you mind telling me," he said, "how much money the people of that island actually owe? It can't be much, to judge by the look of the place."

"Two pounds, seven shillings and fourpence," said Mr. Benson.

"What?"

"Two pounds, seven shillings and fourpence," said Mr. Benson, slowly and distinctly.

"Well, I'm hanged! Do you mean to tell me——? I've steamed all the way from Queenstown—the coal alone—your five men—you—me—one of his Majesty's ships—and——"

"And the price of a new uniform for you," said Mr. Benson.

"All for the sake of two pounds, seven shillings and fourpence."

"And in the end we didn't get it," said Mr. Benson, "though we'd have cleared half the money, anyhow, if you would have let Matty Hynes bring the pig he caught. It wouldn't have done you any



harm. He'd have nursed it in his arms the whole way like a baby."

"Two pounds, seven shillings and fourpence!" said Lieutenant Eckersley.

Mr. Benson saw his opportunity for taking revenge for the snubs he had suffered in the morning.

"Of course you naval men are bound to keep up your dignity," he said. "But even if the pig had been let run loose about your cabin he wouldn't have made more of a mess of that uniform of yours. I almost fancy I can smell it from here."

But Lieutenant Eckersley had no spirit left for self-assertion.

"Two pounds, seven shillings and fourpence," he murmured. "Good Lord!"

## VIII.—BED CLOTHES

EGERTON walked into my private room on Saturday morning and flung a bundle of MS. on my table.

“Read that,” he said.

I was irritated. Egerton is my junior partner—between us we constitute the publishing firm of Burdett Egerton—but I object to his breaking in on me when I am busy.

“What is it?” I asked.

“It’s a story,” he said; “a story which has been submitted to me for the magazine.”

*The Tower Magazine* is one of our ventures, and it is understood between us that Egerton is responsible for it. I resented his trying to make me do his work.

“Who’s it by?” I asked.

“I don’t know. It’s sent to me without name or address attached to it.”

“‘Then for goodness’ sake put it in the waste-paper basket and don’t bother me.”

“It’s good,” said Egerton. “It’s so good that——”

“Then publish it; but for heaven’s sake let me alone. I’m going down to the country for the week-end, and if I’m to catch my train I must——”

“Very well then, I’ll publish it; but if there’s a hideous row afterwards, don’t blame me.”

Egerton is one of those men who pride themselves on freedom from conventional prejudice. If he thinks a thing is good from a literary point of view he does not care how bad it is in every other way. He rather likes shocking people. I have had to remonstrate with him more than once. His hint about the nature of the story that lay on my table frightened me. I publish *The Tower Magazine* with the object of making money, and I am painfully aware that it does not do to shock the public.

"Very well," I said, "leave it there. I'll read it in the train and let you know on Monday what I think of it. But if it's the kind of story——"

"It is," said Egerton. "Exactly that kind of story, only worse; but it's good. It's—I speak quite literally—infernally good. I wish I knew who wrote it."

I had promised to pay a Saturday to Monday visit to my uncle Ambrose in Cambridgeshire. I owe a little attention to the old gentleman in return for my education, which he paid for, and for his kindness in allowing me to consider his rectory my home. He is rather a big man among the local clergy, being a rural dean, a canon and having some reputation as a scholar. I am told that he is likely to be an Archdeacon when the present man drops off. He has a very nice parish, a clean village inhabited, so far as I have ever seen, entirely by respectful old women who curtsey and small boys who sing in the choir. There is also a squire, but

he is the black sheep of the flock, and my uncle sees very little of him. The village is near Newmarket, and the squire is a racing man. When he is at home he has a houseful of fast people and seems particularly fond of fast women. None of his party ever go to church. My uncle is austere clerical in his outlook upon life. I quite realise that he is bound to disapprove of the squire. I can also, I think, understand the squire's dislike of going to church.

I read Egerton's story in the train. It was all he said it was. Guy de Maupassant at his worst was not much worse; but, on the other hand, Guy de Maupassant was not much better. It was a fine, an uncommonly fine short story; but it was plainly impossible to publish it. I stuffed the MS. into the bottom of my bag and sat for the rest of the journey gloating over the abominable cleverness of the thing. It was an absolutely straightforward, simple piece of writing, and the most sacred precepts of morality were remorselessly ridiculed. I felt, as Egerton did, that I should greatly like to know who wrote it. The man or the woman, whichever it was, had something very like actual genius.

On Sunday, after morning service, my uncle Ambrose took me for a stroll round his garden. He gave me his views on *The Tower Magazine*, and I felt, as I listened to him, uncommonly glad that I had not left the story in Egerton's hands. If it had been published my uncle would never have spoken



to me again. He already deplored the levity of the magazine and regretted its want of serious matter.

"Perhaps," he said, "I shall some day send you a paper myself. I have long felt that some attempt ought to be made to instruct our people in the history of the monastic orders."

This was an embarrassing suggestion. I owe a good deal to my uncle Ambrose, but I am running a magazine with the object of making money. And, besides, a paper on the monastic orders would not be fair to Egerton.

"Surely," I said, "your time must be too fully occupied to allow you to undertake such work. Your contemplated monograph on the English Benedictines, your cathedral sermons, your functions as a rural dean, the round of your parochial duties——"

"I have a curate. Mr. Metcalf takes a great deal of routine work off my hands."

I reached out gratefully toward a new subject, one less likely to prove dangerous to my magazine.

"I'm glad you've got a good curate. Is he all you could wish?"

Uncle Ambrose smiled. No curate is all that can be wished.

"Metcalf is a worthy fellow, hard-working and strictly orthodox, a sound churchman; but a little dull. He is very far from being an intellectual companion. You will be able to judge for yourself when you hear him preach this evening."

I thought it very unlikely that I should hear the curate preach. I meant to go to church, of course. I should have no choice about that. But in my youth, when I lived with uncle Ambrose, I acquired a faculty of abstracting my mind from sermons. I could now, I believe, carry on a complicated train of thought undisturbed if St. Chrysostom were thundering golden words in a pulpit close beside me. Nevertheless I did, very much to my surprise, hear that curate's sermon. At least I heard the latter part of it. At first I was fully occupied in going over in my mind the points of the story which lay at the bottom of my bag in the rectory. That story was not a good subject for Sunday meditation, especially in church. But I am glad I happened to be thinking of it, for if my mind had been occupied with anything else I might have missed an interesting sensation.

The curate had been meandering quietly along for about ten minutes, and I sat enjoying my author's method of satirizing a particular moral platitude which he had put in the mouth of one of the characters in the story. Then I heard, actually heard with my ears, the very words which the character in the story had used. The curate said them. I sat up, awakened to consciousness by the extraordinary coincidence. A few minutes later Mr. Metcalf quoted another sentence out of the story, another of the moral truisms which the author had made to look so supremely contemptible. Of course,

the curate spoke in all good faith. Still, he used the very words spoken by the character in the story. This was more than a coincidence. I very nearly jumped out of my seat when this amazing curate concluded his sermon with the longest and most irritating of all the speeches of the fictitious character. He gave it out in tones of calm conviction, but he used once more the identical words of the story.

"I suppose," said my uncle Ambrose at supper, "that you must catch the early train tomorrow as usual."

"No," I said; "if I shan't be in your way, I should like to stay till the afternoon. The fact is I want to have a chat with your curate."

My uncle's eyebrows went up in mild surprise.

"With my curate! Do you know him?"

"No, I don't. But I knew a brother of his very well in college. We rowed in a boat together. The poor fellow is in London now. I fear he is going rapidly to the bad; drink, you know, and other things."

When I lie I always do so with such detail as will carry conviction. It would be the curate's business afterwards, not mine, to explain that fallen brother.

"Ah," said my uncle Ambrose. "Sad, very sad. You're sure to find Metcalf in his lodgings about eleven o'clock. He takes the school at half-past nine, and matins at ten. Then he has the Mothers'

Saving Club, which will occupy him about half an hour."

I found the Reverend Mr. Metcalf at half-past eleven. He was writing when I entered. I noticed that he covered his MS. with blotting paper as if he were afraid that I should read it. It may have been his next sermon. I chose to pretend that I thought it was something else.

"If that is another story, Mr. Metcalf," I said, "please give me the first refusal of it."

He grew quite white and looked at me with an expression of sheer terror in his face. For fully two minutes he did not speak. Then he blurted out:

"Who are you?"

"I am the owner of *The Tower Magazine*. I read a story you sent us lately, and I may say without flattery that it is a remarkably fine piece of work. But I'm not going to print it. It is——"

"I know," he said. "I know very well what it is. But how on earth did you know I wrote it?"

"Well," I said, "if you quote bits of it in your sermons——"

"Did I do that?"

"You did. Oh, don't look frightened. You didn't quote any of the bits I was afraid to print. You quoted, apparently in all good faith, the wretched moral platitudes which the story satirized."

"Good Heavens!" he said. "I can't have done that."



"Yes, you did," I said mercilessly. "You used the exact words."

He stood for a minute with his back toward me leaning over the chimney-piece. Then he turned and said:

"Listen to me. Those things which you call moral platitudes are truths. I believe them. I cling to them. They are the things I live by. They are sacred. But——"

"But you see the comic side of them."

"But," he said, without taking any notice of my remark, "I hear them every day of my life and all day long. I hear them from the canon. I hear them from the other clergy who come here constantly. I hear them from the old women in the village when they want things from me. I hear them from my own lips. I never—do you understand?—I never hear anything else. I believe them. But they get to be like bed clothes, like blankets and quilts laid over my mouth and nostrils. I'm smothered by them."

He gripped me by the arm and led me across the room to the window.

"Look out," he said; "what do you see?"

I saw the village post-office, which was very nearly opposite the curate's lodgings. There were, I noticed, glass jars of sweets in the window, as well as notices about the hours of departure of the mail. Mr. Metcalf, using the eye of imagination, saw

more. He succeeded in making me see the Cambridgeshire landscape.

"There it all is," he said. "Flat land, flat. There's nothing to break the frightful flatness of it except church spires, sticking up stiff into the air, spires and great foolish windmills. Look at the flat fields, the flat roads, the flat sky and those rigid pointed spires."

While he was speaking, a motor car rushed along the village street, a handsome car, one of the squire's, I suppose. In the tonneau sat a woman I recognised, Lady Crumlin. Her reputation, in several respects, had got beyond the stage of being doubtful; but she is a remarkably handsome woman, and is always dressed as if she owned, instead of owing, a large fortune. Mr. Metcalf appeared to be getting somewhat hysterical over the scenery. I attempted to divert his attention from it.

"That," I said with a smile, "is one of the people whom my uncle particularly dislikes. It's a great pity they don't keep up the old fashion of going to church once a week in the country."

Once more the curate entirely ignored my remark. He had seen Lady Crumlin, but he was not thinking of her as a possible member of his congregation.

"Now and then," he said, "people come flashing along these roads. I get a glimpse at them. I don't know them. I don't speak to them. I don't see them at their races or their cards. But I fancy sometimes I can hear the men laugh or smell the

scent off the women's clothes. It's just for a moment. Then I'm back with the flatness again; with what you call the moral platitudes; with the clergy and their matins and evensong; their thin, sharp spires; and their gardens, with little laburnum trees in them, and rose bushes, and strawberry beds; and all the things they say, the quite true things they keep on saying every day. But they smother me. I kick and plunge to get air to breathe. That's how I came to write that story. I'm not a vicious man. I'm not a hypocrite."

"I don't profess to enter fully into your feelings," I said. "But I'm extremely interested. Go on plunging, by all means; but don't kick all the bed clothes off. Remember the decencies and leave a sheet. One sheet won't smother you. And send everything you write to us. It will do you good to get rid of it even if we can't print it."

I went back to London by the afternoon train and told Egerton about the Reverend Mr. Metcalf. He was greatly interested, and agreed with me that we should keep an eye on the curate with a view to securing something from him which it would be possible for us to publish. I promised to have a talk with him next time I paid a visit to my uncle. Unfortunately, most unfortunately as it turned out, I was not able to get away from the office for nearly two months. Then, when I was in a position to run down to Cambridgeshire for a couple of days, I heard that my uncle was ill. The doctor, who was

evidently a man with some knowledge of human nature, said that the old gentleman had broken down from over-work, and ordered him abroad for six months' complete rest. I never myself met anyone who seemed to do less work than my reverend relative; but, of course, the mental strain of being a rural dean may very well be greater than I suppose. At all events my uncle went abroad and was evidently very well pleased both with himself and the doctor. I saw him when he was passing through London, and he was simply puffed up with pride and self-importance. I did not grudge him his holiday in the least, but, being a busy man in my own way, I resented the way in which he insisted on regarding himself as a martyr to duty.

He stayed away, somewhere in northern Italy, for two months longer than the doctor ordered, and it was nearly a year before I visited him in his rectory again. I found a new curate in the parish and inquired what had happened to Mr. Metcalf.

"Metcalf," said my uncle, "behaved badly."

He seemed disinclined to enter into particulars, but I was really anxious to hear about Metcalf.

"Did he," I suggested, "get mixed up with the squire and his lot when you weren't here to look after him?"

"No. Not that I heard of. When I say that he behaved badly, I mean toward me personally. He agreed, distinctly and definitely, though I did not have it in writing, to remain here and look after the



parish while I was away. He left suddenly and without adequate reason almost immediately after I had gone abroad."

"Very inconsiderate," I said. "Where did he go to?"

"I never cared to inquire. If he had been offered a living there would have been some excuse for it. But there was nothing of the sort. He was too young a man to be promoted. Fortunately the Bishop was extremely kind and secured the man I have at present."

"Do you ever hear from Metcalf?"

"No. He has not had the decency to write to me. Considering that I was exceedingly kind to him—I think, by the way, I met that brother of his in London on my way home."

"Brother?"

"Yes, the unfortunate young man of whom you spoke to me. I saw him in the Strand on the morning of my arrival. I don't think I could have been mistaken. The likeness was most striking."

I said nothing, because I could not for the moment recollect ever having heard of Metcalf's brother. Afterwards, when my uncle spoke again, the story of that poor fellow came back to me.

"Metcalf was scarcely straightforward about his brother," said my uncle. "I mentioned to him one day that I was glad to hear you were looking after the young fellow. Metcalf appeared to be embarrassed when he heard your name, but he denied

flatly that he had a brother. I can quite understand a certain amount of reticence. The subject wasn't a pleasant one. Still, I spoke in a most sympathetic way, and I expected, as between two clergymen, that he would have been more candid."

I recollected the brother then. I had myself called him into existence as an excuse for my visit to the original Metcalf. I became greatly interested.

"You're quite sure," I said, "that it was——"

"I did not speak to him," said my uncle. "He hurried past me, but the likeness was unmistakable. In fact, I should have thought it was Metcalf himself if I had not recollected what you told me about the brother. Have you seen him lately?"

"No. I have completely lost sight of him."

"Judging from his appearance," said my uncle, "I should say he had sunk very low, very low indeed. There was every mark of dissipation about him."

"Poor fellow," I said, "he has kicked the bed clothes off in earnest then."

"The bed clothes?"

"It's a slang phrase," I said; "I dare say you never heard it. It means——"

"I can guess at the meaning, especially after seeing Metcalf's brother. You ought to try if you come across him to——"

"I shall," I said. "I'll do the best I can. I'll tell Egerton about him, and between us we'll try

and get hold of him. We'll pull him together if we can."

I meant it, and I am sure that Egerton, with the recollection of that story in his mind, would have done his best. But neither he nor I have ever been able to hear of Metcalf. He has gone under altogether, I suppose. I often wonder whose fault it was. The squire and Lady Crumlin are perhaps to blame to some extent. My uncle Ambrose and the clergy of his rural deanery have a certain responsibility. My own conscience is not wholly clear. The landscape of Cambridgeshire and the church spires—poor Metcalf felt those spires greatly—have their share of the blame. But there may be something more. Ought the Christian religion to look hopelessly flat to a man? Ought it to affect him as an eiderdown quilt spread over his mouth?

## IX.—THE CHILD OF OUR HOPE

**C**HARLIE FETHERSTON was a barrister, a man with good manners, a man of brains, and he possessed, though he concealed the fact, a soul. Most people in Dublin, that is to say in Dublin society, liked him for his good manners, admired him for his brains, and did not distrust him, because they were ignorant of the existence of his soul. On the other hand, his aunt, Lady Honoria Burke, loved him for the sake of his soul. She discovered it in spite of his good manners and his brains. She had a curious power of recognising hidden possibilities in unlikely people. Charlie Fetherston, on his part, had a real affection for his aunt. He described her, to the friends who appreciated his manners and his brains, as "queer, decidedly queer, but a good sort, and very comfortably off." In reality she attracted him because she talked to him, with simple directness, about things which neither he nor she understood, but which roused emotions. One evening in November, in response to an invitation, Charlie Fetherston arrived at his aunt's house. She greeted him solemnly, and motioned him to sit down. She sat opposite to him on a high, straight-backed chair. The room was only lighted by the fire.



"I have seen," said Lady Honoria, without preface, "the Child of our Hope."

Charlie knew that his aunt looked for the coming of a Celtic Messiah, a mysterious prophet who was to redeem Ireland from bondage, and, through Ireland, the world from materialism. He didn't himself believe that any such person was the least likely to appear; but it interested him to hear his aunt talk. He waited, half amused, half impressed, for an account of the revelation.

"I was returning last week from the visit which I pay every year to my brother at Dunrigh. You know what Lord Beverly is like, and how my spirit is tried when I am in his house. I am regarded by his friends as eccentric; and I am obliged to eat meat, sometimes even twice a day, lest they should think of me as very troublesome. The talk is about politics and shooting birds, and such things. In the evening I am often asked to tell fortunes from the hands of giggling girls. For a long time after a return from Dunrigh, I am unable to recover the faculty. I mention these things to you to show that on my way back to Dublin I was in no way predisposed to see visions and dream dreams.

"I reached Athlone; and there I was obliged to get out in order to change into another train. I waited on the platform, and mused on the faces of the people around me, wondering that they were all so commonplace. There was not one that had the capacity for spiritual life written on it. Then a

young woman came near me, bearing a child in her arms. I noticed that she was shabbily dressed, and that she did not look like one of our country-women. Then I saw her no more, for my whole attention was fixed on the child she was carrying. He was a big child, perhaps four years old, too big for a woman to have in her arms; but he looked ill, and that, no doubt, was her reason for carrying him. I saw, faintly indicated, a blue halo round his head. I strained myself to the uttermost to reach the vision perfectly, and by degrees the halo became clear to me. It was bright blue, like an Italian sky, and exceedingly beautiful. I gazed steadily and saw poised above the child a golden figure, armed triumphantly. It was infinitely splendid. I knew then, beyond the possibility of any doubt, that he was the Child of our Hope.

“Before I could speak to her, the mother passed by me and crossed the bridge to the opposite platform. I followed her without hesitation, and saw her get into a train which stood ready to go westwards. There was no time for me to do anything except step into the nearest carriage. I was, of course, bent upon going with her. She got out at the next station—a mere platform by the roadside. The name written on the notice board was Knock-croghery, which, as you know, means ‘hill of the hangman.’ I stood for a moment gazing at it in astonishment, asking myself what fate might lie in the coming of the Child of our Hope from a place

with such a name. Then the stationmaster came and troubled me about a ticket. I had no ticket, for I had never thought of buying one; but I offered to satisfy him by giving money. While I was seeking for my purse I saw the woman going along the road from the station. I was more sure than ever that she was a foreigner, because she carried the child on her back, having wrapped him in a shawl and brought the ends of it across her shoulders. None of our country-women, except the tinkers' wives, carry children in this way. I asked the man who she was, and where she lived. He said: 'Is it poor Mrs. Cane you mean, ma'am? She lives at Cuslough, two miles along the road. She was up to Athlone with her boy, taking him to the doctor. She was telling me that he was very bad. Indeed, it's trouble enough she has, poor lady, without that.'

"I wondered that he should speak of her as 'poor,' who was the mother of the Child of our Hope, and I thought how generations after would call her blessed. Then I asked the man the way to Cuslough.

"'It's two miles if you follow the road, ma'am, and you can't miss it; for it's the first house you see when you come at the lake; but you could save half the distance by crossing the bog, and it won't be soft this weather.'

"I thought that the woman would go by the shorter way, and that I might overtake her. However, I did not see her; but I lost my way, and

wandered through the bog, so that a full hour passed before I reached Cuslough. It was a very gloomy house, standing low down near the lake-shore, and altogether surrounded and overshadowed by trees. I went up to it along a dark walk, soft under foot with fallen leaves, and grey, knee-deep with mist. I knocked, but there was no answer. I knocked again and again and waited, but no one came to me. At last I heard a child crying inside. The knowledge that trouble was on the Child of our Hope made me bold, so that I went round to the back of the house. I came to the yard; it was very dirty and untidy; and opposite me I saw some hens and chickens pecking oats which had been scattered on the ground for them. I turned and saw, standing in the kitchen doorway, the woman, the mother of the child. She had a gun. The barrel of it was resting on the back of a chair, and she seemed about to fire it off. It pointed towards the hens. I was astonished, and cried out to her. She answered me, speaking English correctly, but in the manner of a Frenchwoman.

“‘I want to kill one of them, a chicken for the boy. The doctor said I was to give him chicken-soup and chicken-jelly. I am able to make the soup and jelly very well; but never, never have I killed a chicken. In my country one buys them dead in the shops. It is altogether horrible; but I must kill it. I thought of other ways; but I could not, no, I could not, do it. It seemed easier



thus with the gun. And now I am afraid to shoot.'

"'My dear,' I said. She was so helpless and frightened that she seemed like a young girl to me, though she was the mother of the Child of our Hope. 'Have you no one to kill the chicken for you? Is there no servant?'

"'I had one,' she said, 'but she went away from me last week. She would not stay, because——'

"She stopped, seeming to think that I would guess the reason. I did not wish to try, because the thing most in my mind was the need of getting the chicken killed. I asked:

"'Where is your husband?' knowing that there must be a husband somewhere because she had a gun.

"'He! Bah! He is in there asleep.'

"Afterwards, when I went into the house, I understood her scorn. The man lay drunk upon the floor of the sitting-room. His face was bloated and coarse almost beyond belief; but I knew him. You will remember hearing of James Cane, the brilliant barrister who made the speeches touched with genius. He was a Member of Parliament for a while, though it was never possible to understand how he, for he had genius, could join himself to those or go there. We lost sight of him; but I always thought that we should hear of him again. Well, it was there I found him, drunk, while his child lay sick. It was a very sad thing to me to see him there. But I understood how he might be

the father of the child. It is true that he went under, but he had genius once.

"The young woman still held the gun, and I knew that if she pulled the trigger, she would shoot all her pretty fowls. I made up my mind that I myself must kill the chicken, and I asked her for a knife.

"'Now, my dear, you are a young woman, and I am an old one. You must catch the chicken, and then you may go into the kitchen.'

"I will not tell you how I did it, though the recollection will always be with me and haunt me in my dreams at night. It was a very terrible thing for me to do, because I am a lover of all things that live, and I never willingly eat of food got by the sacrifice of life. Yet I made my heart hard and did it, thinking of the Child of our Hope, and that I had heard him cry.

"Afterwards she made the broth, while I sat beside the child's cot and tried to soothe him. The beautiful blue halo was always round his head, and the figure, the glorious blazing figure, poised over him. It made me brave and patient to see it there. When the mother came in, we tried to make him take the broth; but he would not. He fought against us, and for all that we could do he would not take it. After a while we gave it up and she took him in her arms and held him, singing little French songs to quiet him. I was not able to help her because I have no skill with little children. I

suppose this is because I do not love them much, never having had any child of my own. But I loved this child for the sake of the great hope that was in me. So I knelt beside her, and prayed for his life. Quickly, as it seemed to me, the daylight faded away, and it came to be evening and then night. Still I prayed, and I could hear her singing softly and rocking him to and fro in her arms. It grew very dark. I did not think that any night was so dark as that one was. I could see nothing except the shine of the blue halo moving gently from side to side as she swayed the child. When I got weary praying, I looked at it and took courage and fresh strength from it. Once, it must have been early in the morning, I missed the halo. I gazed with all my might, but I could not see it. Then I knew that the child was dead. I remembered that for some time he had not cried. I did not tell her that he was dead, for she had ceased singing and sat still, so that I thought she slept. Perhaps after that I slept too, huddled on the floor beside her. When I next remember anything, the morning light was coming into the room. She was awake also; but she did not know even then that the child was dead. She was rocking him in her arms as she had done before, and singing her foolish little songs to him.

“Then, I think it must have been about seven o’clock, I heard a voice in the next room, and the man rose and came into the chamber where we

were. When he saw me, he stopped and stared. Then he began to curse me and his wife. I cannot remember, I do not think I really heard, the words he said or the names he called us. I looked at her, but she seemed neither surprised nor frightened.

“‘You had better go away,’ she said; ‘you have been very kind to me, but it is not right that you should stay for this. Besides, if you go, he will be quiet, perhaps, and will not wake the child.’

“I knew that he could not wake the child. I went over and kissed her on the cheek; then I kissed the dead lips of the Child of our Hope, and signed him with the cross upon the forehead. The man followed me out of the house and a little way along the road, cursing me. But I did not care.

“Now, Charlie, I have told you what I brought you here to tell. I have seen the Child of our Hope. He was with us, but he is gone again. Can you tell me what it means?”

Charles Fetherston looked at her. Then he rose slowly, and stretched out his hand to take hers.

“Good-night, Aunt Honoria. I do not know what to say to you, or what to think.”

“But how it is?” she asked. “I cannot understand. He was with us and is gone, and nothing seems to come of it?”

At the door Charles turned.

“Perhaps,” he said “she, the young woman, the mother, may have another child some day.”



## X.—MAD ANTONY

FATHER LARRY O'NEILL, the parish priest of Curraghmore, was a deservedly popular man with all classes of the community. The neighbouring Protestant gentry described him as "a thoroughly good sort," which was high tribute to his worth, for as a class the Protestant gentry are not inclined to be friendly to priests. But Father Larry was an exceptional man. He subscribed liberally to projects in which the gentry were interested, such as flower shows and yacht races. He never made political speeches, and his manners were so delightfully friendly and cheerful that no one could resist him for very long. The other gentlemen, those who represented the county in Parliament, and their political friends in the neighbourhood, spoke very highly of Father Larry, in spite of his want of interest in their favourite pursuit. He didn't like them to fire off orations at his parishioners, but he was always pleased to entertain them hospitably at the Presbytery. The food and drink he provided for them were of the best, and many a man was well content to keep his eloquence bottled up for the sake of enjoying the uncorking of Father Larry's excellent champagne. His own parishioners adored him, because he was singularly inexacting in the

matter of dues and fees, and never wanted to raise money for the building of a new church.

All this was possible, because Father Larry was a well-off man. Shortly after leaving Maynooth he inherited a considerable fortune from an uncle, who had made money as a contractor in a midland town. In his earlier, unmoneyed days, Larry O'Neill had been a cause of a good deal of perplexity to his relations and ecclesiastical superiors. He was religious, which is proper and desirable in a candidate for the priesthood; but he was religious in an eccentric way, which nobody quite understood. He practised privately forms of asceticism which, if not actually heretical, were certainly unusual and suspicious. He read with enthusiastic admiration the lives of saints, which was right; but he appeared to want to imitate the extravagances of the saints, which was clearly undesirable. Nothing would be a greater nuisance in Ireland to-day than an Antony or a Francis of the primitive or mediæval pattern. But the acquisition of money sobered Father Larry. He put the saints in their proper places at the back of his mind, and set to work to realise a Christianity of a more practical kind than theirs.

Being rich and therefore comfortable himself he wanted to make everyone else comfortable too, as far as possible. Unfortunately, it wasn't easy to do this at Curraghmore. The people were half farmers, half fishermen. Neither industry by itself offers any prospect of wealth in the west of Ireland, and

a combination of the two results, as a rule, in hopeless poverty. It was not enough to refrain from demanding subscriptions and fees from such people. It appeared necessary to adopt some means for bringing more money into the parish.

Meditating on ways of relieving the poverty of his people, Father Larry's thoughts turned naturally to the Government.

There is nothing the Government—any Government—enjoys more than spending money in the west of Ireland. There exist all sorts of organisations, officers, boards, departments, and officials for the sole purpose of spending money in Connaught and similar places. If you bring proper influences to bear on it, the Government, through one or another of its boards, will give you almost anything you want—a bull, a pig, a horse, a flock of hens, or a hive of bees. It will supply fishing boats, nets and apparatus for curing any creatures you may happen to catch. It will buy you a farm, build you a pig-sty, plant you an apple tree, or, if you prefer it, teach your daughter to make crochet. Father Larry, after a careful survey of the field of its activities, decided to have a pier. Neither he nor his parishioners wanted such a thing in the least. If some slave of a lamp had dumped down a ready-made pier on their coast they would probably have petitioned the Government to have the thing carted away. What they did want was the opportunity of earning good wages; and a pier,

planned by Father Larry, and built under the superintendence of a Government engineer, would cost a great deal.

Once his mind was made up, Father Larry went to work with vigour. Dublin Castle and the adjacent offices were bombarded with letters from members of Parliament and councillors—county, district, and urban—who had feasted at Curraghmore Presbytery. The gentry, with the recollection of handsome subscriptions in their minds, used their influence. Father Larry himself had interviews with the Chief Secretary, who is *ex-officio* chairman of every board. The natural result followed. People who only wanted chickens or crochet hooks, and had not thought it worth while to erect powerful batteries, were told to wait awhile, and Mr. Simpson, B.E., was sent down to Curraghmore to choose a site for the new pier.

Now Father Larry and his parishioners had already decided that the pier was to be built on the end of a remote promontory—a site which offered several advantages. The nearest house was two miles distant, so no one would be disturbed by the progress of the work. There was no road to the place, so it would cost a good deal to get the building materials there. The sea outside was so rocky and shallow that boats never went within a mile of it, therefore the thing when finished would not interfere with the fishing or be in anybody's way. The situation was, in fact, an ideal one for a Govern-



ment pier, and nothing remained except to explain its advantages to the engineer.

Father Larry met him at the railway station, and drove him to the Presbytery behind a fast cob. There was an excellent luncheon, a bottle of claret, and a good cigar. Then the cob was put to again, and trotted out to the place where the road stopped. From this point a view was obtained of the shore which the pier was to adorn. Mr. Simpson, though he had only recently emerged from the Trinity College Engineering School, was a shrewd youth. He knew that his tenure of office depended not upon the utility of the piers he built, but on his planning the expenditure of money in ways agreeable to local authorities like Father Larry. He wrote a report, in which he strongly recommended the site selected.

Early in the following May the work commenced. Father Larry took the greatest interest in all that was done, and invited Mr. Simpson to a six o'clock dinner on the day when the first stone was laid. The food and drink were of the best, and it was half-past seven when the two men emerged, in benignant humour, to smoke on the lawn in front of the Presbytery.

"A queer thing happened to-day," said Mr. Simpson. "Shortly after we started work the funniest looking old chappie you ever saw came out of a cave in the rock at the end of the beach. He stood looking at us for a long time. I give you my word

I never saw such a scarecrow in all my life. He looked so infernally wretched that I offered him sixpence. You'll hardly believe me, but the creature refused it."

"Oh!" said Father Larry, "now that would be Mad Antony."

"You know him then?"

"I do not; but I've heard of him. He was a schoolmaster once, but he went clean off his head, and took to living in a cave. The country people send their children to him with cold potatoes and a jug of buttermilk when they have any to spare. He's harmless, I believe, but quite mad."

"He must be," said Mr. Simpson, with conviction. "Fancy his refusing the sixpense! I wish you could have seen him; you'd have laughed! His—By Jove! I believe this is the old chappie himself coming to pay you a visit!"

Father Larry looked round. A man, oddly enough attired to justify the anticipated mirth, approached them slowly. The remains of a pair of trousers hung in a ragged fringe a little below his knees. There were no buttons on them, but pieces of strings were laced through holes in the material and tied in knots. A bawneen, no longer white, but brown with age and want of washing was fastened in the same way across his chest. Over his shoulders, like a kind of mantle, hung a dilapidated sack. His head and feet were bare. The man was more miserable looking than any one

whom Father Larry had ever seen. He fumbled in his pocket and drew out half-a-crown. The man shook his head.

"Food!" he said.

"Go round to the back door, my poor man," said the priest, "and tell my housekeeper to give you your dinner."

"It is yourself and no one else who must give me food."

Father Larry looked up, for the words surprised him. He saw two clear blue eyes, looking into his, and their expression puzzled him. They neither supplicated like a beggar's eyes nor glowed with sulky envy like a tramp's. It seemed—only the thing was manifestly absurd—that Mad Antony looked at him with pity. For a minute the men gazed at each other, and then it was the priest's eyes which dropped. He was harassed with a feeling that he had seen the man before, but where or when he could not recollect. He got up, went into the house, and returned with half a loaf of bread. Mad Antony took it without a word, recrossed the lawn, and disappeared through the gate.

Soon, for the evenings in May grow chilly after sunset, Father Larry and Mr. Simpson went into the house. At ten o'clock the engineer, pleading the necessity of early rising, took his leave. Father Larry stood on the doorstep, watched him wheel his bicycle down the drive, and heard the gate shut

after him. As he turned to re-enter the house he was startled by a shout:

"Father O'Neill! Hallo! Here's this ridiculous old ragman sitting just outside your gate with the chunk of bread you gave him in his hand. I thought you'd like to know. Better bar your doors and windows! Good-night!"

Father Larry had his glass of whiskey and water, and went to bed. Instead of dropping straight off to sleep, as a man with a clear conscience and a balance in the bank has a right to do, he lay and tossed uneasily. Mad. Antony's eyes vexed him because of their peculiar expression, and because he could not understand why they seemed familiar. Also, for his heart was kind, the thought of the poor wretch shelterless on the roadside hurt him. At last the trouble of his mind became intolerable. He got up, put on a dressing-gown, and went out to look for the man. The night was calm, and by the light of his bedroom candle he discovered him crouched beside the gatepost. He took him by the hand—the cold of it chilled his own—and led him into the Presbytery. He piled turf on the kitchen fire, and blew it into a blaze. Then he set out the remains of the dinner and a bottle of whiskey. His heart glowed with a desire to feed and warm the miserable creature before him.

"Come, my poor man," he said, "eat and drink. You shall sleep to-night before the fire; to-morrow



I'll get you a suit of clothes, and we'll see what can be done for you."

But the man made no move to take the food. He looked intently at the priest, and the same inexplicable pity was in his eyes.

"Larry," he said at last, "have you forgotten me—Antony Callaghan, of Clooneen, who went to be a schoolmaster?"

"My God!" said the priest, "is it you indeed, Antony? What has brought you to this?"

"To this!" Mad Antony said no more, but there was a ring of triumph in his voice, and his face lighted up suddenly with an expression of great joy. Father Larry could not in the least understand what the strange exultation meant, only he knew very well that the man was not mad. Then, very curiously, without apparent reason, a recollection flashed on him.

"It was you who were the first of all to tell me the story of St. Francis and of that other saint of your own, the old St. Antony. It was down by the sea on Trawawn. The tide was racing in across the strand, and the sky was all black out west."

"The remembrance of it is on me, and of the other day, when you had served at Mass, how you and I read afterwards in the priest's book."

"Ah! indeed, I remember that too. Don't I know the words well enough now? '*Si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende quae habes et veni sequere me.*'"

A thought came on him suddenly, awing him with its immensity.

"Antony?" he whispered, "you have done this?"

"I have tried," said the other, and a smile of great peace was on his lips. "And, Larry, my friend, all that they ever said is true. There is joy in it beyond the glory of the sun that sets across the sea in the summer time. The sweetness is far more than what the words of my tongue can tell. Larry! oh, Larry! I have found Him, found the beloved Lord Jesus, my sweet Saviour, and the delight of being with Him comes on me like the flood of the great spring tide in September when it flows over all the bay and kisses the grass above the rocks and winds smooth among the little islands, and is warm and infinite. I came to you to-day—only I could not do it because of the man who sat with you—to thank you for the good deed you have done me. It is through you, as I think, that I am going forth to-night from the last place I called my own, and giving up the last pleasure that bound me to the world—the faces of the little children who brought food to me. Now there is nothing, no, nothing on all the earth now to keep me back from—from Him.

He knelt and took the priest's hands and pressed them to his lips.

"So you have found it, Antony," said Father Larry, slowly. "You have found what we dreamed

of when we were boys. And I——” He dragged away his hands from the other’s grasp and covered his face with them. Mad Antony looked up at him.

“Come with me,” he whispered. “Come, leave all and you shall find it too. Remember, remember you heard the voice calling you. Once you understood what the great call means. Yes, you understand it still. Come with me.”

The priest uncovered his eyes and looked at the figure before him. The bare legs stretched out stark below the ragged fringe; the face with its matted beard was emaciated; dirt stuck, clotted into scabs, on the bawneen.

“I cannot do it!” he said despairingly.

“Is it too hard for you? Ah! if you only knew, it is not really hard.” He turned and went towards the door.

“Stay with me!” cried the priest. “You cannot go into the world alone like that. Stay and live with me. You shall share all I have. You can help me to be good, to do good. You cannot go! Oh, stay and I will say Mass every day and you shall kneel before the altar and take Him from my hands!”

Already Mad Antony was at the door, but he turned for a moment. The firelight reached him and played upon the grotesquely tattered clothing; but his face seemed to shine with a brighter light.

“How can I stay? Have I not heard the Voice? Must I not go to Him?”

## XI.—CIVIL WAR

SAM McALISTER walked into my office yesterday and laid down a handful of silver on my desk.

"There you are," he said, "and I am very much obliged to you for the loan."

For the moment I could not recollect having lent Sam any money; though I should be glad to do so at any time if I thought he wanted it. Sam is a boy I like. He is an undergraduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and has the makings of a man in him, though he is not good at passing examinations and has never figured in an honours list. Some day, when he takes his degree, he is to come into my office and be made into a lawyer. His father, the Dean, is an old friend of mine.

I looked at the money lying before me, and then doubtfully at Sam.

"If you've forgotten all about it," he said, "it's rather a pity I paid. But I always was honest. That's one of my misfortunes. If I wasn't——. That's the fine you paid for me."

Then I remembered. Sam got into trouble with the police a few weeks ago. He and a dozen or so of his fellow-students broke loose and ran riot through the streets of Dublin. All high-spirited



boys do this sort of thing occasionally, whether they are junior army officers, lawyers' clerks, or university undergraduates. Trinity College boys, being Irish and having a large city at their gates, riot more picturesquely than anyone else. Sam had captured the flag which the Lord Mayor flies outside his house, had pushed a horse upstairs into the office of a respectable stockbroker, and had driven a motor-car, borrowed from an unwilling owner, down a narrow and congested street at twenty-five or thirty miles an hour. He was captured in the end by eight policemen, and was very nearly sent to gaol with hard labour. I got him off by paying a fine of one pound, together with £2 4s. 6d. for the damage done by the horse to the stockbroker's staircase and office furniture. The motor-car, fortunately, had neither injured itself nor anyone else.

"I hope," I said, pocketing the money, "that this will be a lesson to you, Sam."

"It won't," he said. "At least, not in the way you mean. It'll encourage me to go into another rag the very first time I get the chance. As a matter of fact, being arrested was the luckiest thing ever happened to me, though I didn't think so at the time."

"Well," I said, "if you like paying up these large sums it's your own affair. I should have thought you could have got better value for your money by spending it on something you wanted."

"Money isn't everything in the world," said Sam.

"There is such a thing as having a good time, a rattling good time, even if you don't make money out of it and run a chance of being arrested. I daresay you'd like to hear what I've been at."

"If you've committed any kind of crime," I said, "I'd rather you didn't tell me. It might be awkward for me afterwards when you are tried."

"I don't think it's exactly a crime," said Sam, "anyhow, it isn't anything wrong, though, of course, it may be slightly illegal. I'd rather like to have your opinion about that."

"Is it a long story? I'm rather busy to-day."

"Not very long," said Sam, "but I daresay it would sound better after dinner. What would you say now to asking me to dine to-night at your club? We could go up to that library place afterwards. There's never anybody there, and I could tell you the whole thing."

Sam knows the ways of my club nearly as well as I do myself. There is never anyone in the library in the evening. I gave the required invitation.

We dined comfortably, and I got a good cigar for Sam afterwards. When the waiter had left the room he plunged into his story.

"You remember the day I was hauled up before that old ass of a magistrate. He jawed a lot and then fined me £3 4s. 6d., which you paid. Jolly decent of you. I hadn't a shilling in the world, being absolutely stony broke at the time; so if

you hadn't paid—and lots of fellows wouldn't—I should have had to go to gaol."

"Never mind about that," I said. "You've paid me back."

"Still, I'm grateful, especially as I should have missed the spree of my life if I'd been locked up. As it was, thanks to you, I walked out of the court without a stain on my character."

"Well hardly that. You were found guilty of riotous behaviour, you know."

"Anyhow, I walked out," said Sam, "and that's the main point."

It was, of course, the point which mattered most; and, after all, the stain on Sam's character was not indelible. Lots of young fellows behave riotously and turn out excellent men afterwards. I was an undergraduate myself once, and there is a story about Sam's father, now a dean, which is still told occasionally. When he was an undergraduate a cow was found tied up in the big examination hall. Sam's father, who was very far from being a dean then, had borrowed the cow from a milkman.

"There were a lot of men waiting outside," said Sam. "They wanted to stand me a lunch in honour of my escape."

"Your fellow-rioters, I suppose?"

"Well, most of them had been in the rag, and, of course, they were sorry for me, being the only one actually caught. However, the lunch never came off. There was a queer old fellow standing on the

steps of the Court who got me by the arm as I came out. Said he wanted to speak to me on important business, and would I lunch with him. I didn't know what he could possibly have to say to me, for I had never seen him before; but he looked—it's rather hard to describe how he looked. He wasn't exactly what you'd call a gentleman, in the way of clothes, I mean; but he struck me as being a sportsman.

“Horsey?”

Not the least. More like one's idea of some kind of modern pirate, though not exactly. He talked like an American. I went with him, of course.”

“Of course,” I said, “anyone with an adventurous spirit would prefer lunching with an unknown American buccaneer to sharing a commonplace feast with a mob of boys. Did you happen to hear his name?”

“He said it was Hazlewood, but——”

“But it may not have been?”

“One of the other fellows called him Cassidy later on.”

“Oh,” I said, “there were other fellows?”

“There were afterwards,” said Sam, “not at first. He and I lunched alone. He did me well. A bottle of champagne for the two of us and offered me a second bottle. I refused that.”

“He came to business after the champagne, I suppose?”



"He more or less talked business the whole time, though at first I didn't know quite what he was at. He gassed a lot about my having knocked down those two policemen. You remember that I knocked down two, don't you? I would have got a third only that they collared me from behind. Well, Hazlewood, or Cassidy, or whatever his name was, had seen the scrap, and seemed to think no end of a lot of me for the fight I put up."

"The magistrate took a serious view of it, too," I said.

"There wasn't much in it," said Sam modestly. "As I told Hazlewood, any fool can knock down a policeman. They're so darned fat. He asked me if I liked fighting policemen. I said I did."

"Of course."

Sam caught some note of sarcasm in my voice. He felt it necessary to modify his statement.

"Well, not policemen in particular. I haven't a special down on policemen. I like a scrap with anyone. Then he said—Hazlewood, that is—that he admired the way I drove that car down Grafton Street. He said he liked a man who wasn't afraid to take risks; which was rot. There wasn't any real risk."

"The police swore that you went at thirty miles an hour," I said. "And that street is simply crowded in the middle of the day."

"I don't believe I was doing anything like thirty miles an hour," said Sam. "I should say twenty-

seven at the outside. And there was no risk because everybody cleared out of my way. I had the street practically to myself. It was rather fun seeing all the other cars and carts and things piled up upon the footpaths at either side and the people bolting into the shops like rabbits. But there wasn't any risk. However, old Hazlewood evidently thought there was, and seemed frightfully pleased about it. He said he had a car of his own, a sixty h.p. Daimler, and that he'd like to see me drive it. I said I'd take him for a spin any time he liked. I gave him a hint that we might start immediately after lunch and run up to Belfast in time for dinner. With a car like that I could have done it easy. However, he wasn't on."

"Do you think he really had the car?"

"Oh, he had her all right. I drove her afterwards. Great Scott, such a drive! The next thing he said was that he believed I was a pretty good man in a boat. I said I knew something about boats, though not much."

Modesty is one of Sam's virtues. He is, I believe, an excellent hand in a small yacht, and does a good deal of racing.

"I asked him what put it into his head that I could sail a boat, and he said O'Meara told him. O'Meara is a man I sail with occasionally, and I thought it nice of him to mention my name to this old boy. I can hoist a spinnaker all right and shift a jib, but I'm no good at navigation. Always did

hate sums and always will. I told him that, and he said he could do the navigation himself. All he wanted was a good amateur crew for a thirty-ton yawl with a motor auxiliary. He had four men, and he asked me to make a fifth. I said I'd go like a shot. Strictly speaking, I ought to have been attending lectures; but what good are lectures?"

"Very little," I said. "In fact, hardly any."

"I wasn't going to lose a cruise for the sake of any amount of lectures," said Sam, "particularly with the chance of a tour on that sixty h.p. car thrown in."

Sam paused at this point. It seemed to me that he wanted encouragement.

"You'd have been a fool if you had," I said.

"Up to that time," said Sam thoughtfully, "I hadn't tumbled to what he was at. I give you my word of honour I hadn't the dimmest idea that he was after anything in particular. I thought he was simply a good old sport with lots of money, which he knew how to spend in sensible ways."

"The criminal part of the business was mentioned later on, I suppose?"

"I don't know that there's anything criminal about it," said Sam. "I'm jolly well sure it wasn't wrong, under the circumstances. But it may have been criminal. That's just what I want you to tell me."

"I'll give you my opinion," I said, "when I hear what it was."

"Gun-running," said Sam.

Gun-running has for some time been a popular sport in Ireland, and I find it very difficult to say whether it is against the law or not. The Government goes in for trying to stop it, which looks as if a gun-runner might be prosecuted when caught. On the other hand, the Government never prosecutes gun-runners, even those who openly boast of their exploits, and that looks as if it were quite a legal amusement. I promised Sam that I would consider the point, and I asked him to tell me exactly what he did.

"Well," he said, "when I heard it was gun-running I simply jumped at the chance. Any fellow would. I said I'd start right away, if he liked. As a matter of fact, we didn't start for nearly a fortnight. The boat turned out to be the Pegeen. You know the Pegeen, don't you?"

I did not. I am not a sailor, and except that I cannot help seeing paragraphs about Shamrock IV. in the daily papers I do not think I know the name of a single yacht.

"Well," said Sam, "she's O'Meara's boat. I've sailed in her sometimes in cruiser races. She's slow and never does any good, but she's a fine sea boat. My idea was that Hazlewood had hired her, and I didn't find out till after we had started that O'Meara was on board. That surprised me a bit, for O'Meara goes in for being rather an extreme kind of Nationalist—not the sort of fellow you'd expect to be



running guns for Carson and the Ulster Volunteers. However, I was jolly glad to see him. He crawled out of the cabin when we were a couple of miles out of the harbour, and by that time I'd have been glad to see anyone who knew one end of the boat from the other. Old Hazlewood was all right; but the other three men were simply rotters, the sort of fellows who'd be just as likely as not to take a pull on a topsail halyard when told to slack away the lee runner. I was just making up my mind to work the boat single-handed when O'Meara turned up. There was a middling fresh breeze from the west, and we were going south on a reach. I didn't get much chance of a talk with O'Meara because he was in one watch and I in the other—had to be, of course, on account of being the only two who knew anything about working the boat. I did notice, though, that when he spoke to Hazlewood he called him Cassidy. However, that was no business of mine. We sailed pretty nearly due south that day and the next, and the next after that. Then we hove to."

"Where?" I asked.

"Ask me another," said Sam. "I told you I couldn't navigate. I hadn't an idea within a hundred miles where we were. What's more, I didn't care. I was having a splendid time, and had succeeded in knocking some sort of sense into the other fellow in my watch. Hazlewood steered, and barring that he was seasick for eight hours, my man turned out

to be a decent sort, and fairly intelligent. He said his name was Temple, but Hazlewood called him O'Reilly as often as not."

"You seem to have gone in for a nice variety of names," I said. "What did you call yourself?"

"I stuck to my own name, of course. I wasn't doing anything to be ashamed of. If we'd been caught and the thing had turned out to be a crime—I don't know whether it was or not, but if it was, I suppose——"

"I suppose I should have paid your fine," I said.

"Thanks," said Sam. "Thanks awfully. I rather expected you would whenever I thought about that part of it, but I very seldom did."

"What happened when you lay to?"

"Nothing at first. We bumped about a bit for five or six hours and Temple got frightfully sick again. I never saw a man sicker. Hazlewood kept on muddling about with charts, and doing sums on sheets of paper, and consulting with O'Meara. I suppose they wanted to make sure that they'd got to the right place. At last, just about sunset, a small steamer turned up. She hung about all night, and next day we started early, about four o'clock, and got the guns out of her, or some of them. We couldn't take the whole cargo, of course, in a 30-ton yacht. I don't know how many more guns she had. Perhaps she hadn't any more. Only our little lot. Anyhow, I was jolly glad when the job was over. There was a bit of a roll—nothing much, you know,

but quite enough to make it pretty awkward. Temple got over his seasickness, which was a comfort. I suppose the excitement cured him. The way we worked was this—but I daresay you wouldn't understand, even if I told you."

"Is it very technical? I mean, must you use many sea words?"

"Must," said Sam. "We were at sea, you know."

"Well," I said, "perhaps you'd better leave that part out. Tell me what you did with the guns when you'd got them."

"Right. It was there the fun really came in. Not that I'm complaining about the other part. It was sport all right, but the funny part, the part you'll like, came later. What about another cigar?"

I rang the bell, and got two more cigars for Sam.

"We had rather a tiresome passage home," he said. "It kept on falling calm, and O'Meara's motor isn't very powerful. It took us a clear week to work our way up to the County Down coast. It was there we landed, in a poky little harbour. We went in at night, and had to wait for a full tide to get in at all. We got the sails of the boat outside, and just strolled in, so to speak, with the wretched little engine doing about half it could. Hazlewood told me that he expected four motor-cars to meet us, and that I was to take one of them, and drive like hell into County Armagh. There I was to call at a house belonging to O'Meara, and hand over my share of the guns. He said he hoped I knew

my way about those parts, because it would be awkward for me trying to work with road maps when I ought to drive fast. I said I knew that country like the palm of my hand. 'The governor's parish is up there, you know.'

Sam certainly ought to know County Down. He was brought up there, and must have walked, cycled, and driven over most of the roads.

"The only thing I didn't know," said Sam, "was O'Meara's house. I'd never heard of his having a house in that part of the country. However, he said he'd only taken it lately, and that when I got over the border into Armagh there'd be a man waiting to show me where to go. He told me the road I was to take, and I knew every turn of the way, so I felt pretty sure of getting there. It was about two in the morning when we got alongside the pier. The four motors were there all right, but there wasn't a soul about except the men in charge of them. We got out the guns. They were done up in small bundles and the cartridges in handy little cases; but it took us till half-past four o'clock to get them ashore. By that time there were a few people knocking about; but they didn't seem to want to interfere with us. In fact, some of them came and helped us to pack the stuff into the cars. They were perfectly friendly."

"That doesn't surprise me in the least," I said. "The people up there are nearly all Protestants. Most of them were probably Volunteers themselves.



I daresay it wasn't the first cargo they'd helped to land."

"It was the first cargo they ever helped to land for the National Volunteers," said Sam with a grin.

"The National Volunteers!"

I admit that Sam startled me. I do not suppose that he has any political convictions. At the age of twenty a man has a few prejudices but no convictions. If he is a young fellow who goes in for being intellectual they are prejudices against the party his father belongs to. If—and this is Sam's case—he is a healthy-minded young man, who enjoys sport, he takes over his father's opinions as they stand, and regards everybody who does not accept them as an irredeemable blackguard. The Dean is a very strong loyalist. He is the chaplain of an Orange Lodge, and has told me more than once that he hopes to march to battle at the head of his regiment of Volunteers.

"Smuggling arms for the Nationalists!" I said.

"That's what I did," said Sam, grinning broadly. "But I thought all the time that I was working for the other side. I didn't know the Nationalists went in for guns; thought they only talked. In fact, to tell you the truth, I forgot all about them. Otherwise I wouldn't have done it. At least I mightn't. But I had a great time."

"Of course," I said, "I don't mind. So far as I am concerned personally I'd rather neither side had

any guns. But if your father finds out Sam, there'll be a frightful row. He'll disown you."

"The governor knows all about it," said Sam, "and he doesn't mind one bit. Just wait till you hear the end of the story. You'll be as surprised as I was."

"I certainly shall," I said, "if the story ends in your father's approving of your smuggling guns for rebels. He'd call them rebels, you know."

"Oh," said Sam, "as far as rebellion goes I don't see that there's much to choose between them. However, that doesn't matter. What happened was this. I got off with my load about five o'clock, and I had a gorgeous spin. There wasn't a cart or a thing on the roads, and I just let the car rip. I touched sixty miles an hour, and hardly ever dropped below forty. Best run I ever had. Almost the only thing I passed was a motor lorry, going the same way I was. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but it turned out to be important afterwards. It was about seven o'clock when I got out of County Down into Armagh. I began looking out for the fellow who was to meet me. It wasn't long before I spotted him, standing at a corner, trying to look as if he were a military sentry. You know the sort of thing I mean. Bandolier, belt, and frightfully stiff about the back. He held up his hand and I stopped. 'A loyal man,' he said. Well, I was, so far as I knew at that time, so I said, 'You bet.' 'That's not right,' said he. 'Give the countersign.'

I hadn't heard anything about a countersign, so I told him not to be a fool, and that I'd break his head if he said I wasn't a loyal man. That seemed to puzzle him a bit. He got out a notebook and read a page or two, looking at me and the car every now and then as if he wasn't quite satisfied. I felt pretty sure, of course, that he was the man I wanted. He couldn't very well be anyone else. So by way of cutting the business short I told him I was loaded up with guns and cartridges, and that I wished he'd hop in and show me where to go. 'That's all very fine,' he said, 'but you oughtn't to be in a car like that.' I told him there was no use arguing about the car. I wasn't going back to change it to please him. He asked me who I was, and I told him, mentioning that I was the governor's son. I thought that might help him to make up his mind, and it did. The governor is middling well known up in those parts, and the mention of his name was enough. The fellow climbed in beside me. We hadn't very far to go, as it turned out, and in the inside of twenty minutes I was driving up the avenue of a big house. The size of it rather surprised me, for I didn't think O'Meara was well enough off to keep up a place of the kind. However, I was evidently expected, for I was shown into the dining-room by a footman. There were three men at breakfast, my old dad, Dopping—you know Dopping, don't you?"

Dopping is a retired cavalry colonel. I do busi-

ness for him and know him pretty well. He is just the sort of man who would be in the thick of any gun-running that was going on.

"There was another man," said Sam, "whom I didn't know and wasn't introduced to. The fact is there wasn't much time for politeness. My dad looked as if he'd been shot when he saw me, and old Dopping bristled all over like an Irish terrier at the beginning of a fight, and asked me who the devil I was and what I was doing there. Of course, he jolly well knew who I was, and I thought he must know what brought me there, so I just winked by way of letting him understand that I was in the game. He got so red in the face that I thought he'd burst. Then the other man chipped in and asked me what I'd got in the car. I told him. The three of them whispered together for a bit, and I suggested that if they didn't believe me they'd better go and see. The car was outside the door, and their own man was sitting on the guns. Dopping went, and I suppose he told the other two that the guns were there all right. Dad asked me where I got them, and I told him, mentioning Hazlewood's name and the name of the yacht. I was a bit puzzled, but I still thought everything was all right, and that there'd be no harm in mentioning names. I very soon saw that there was some sort of mistake somewhere. The governor and old Dopping and the other man, who seemed to be the coolest of the three, went over to the window and looked at the



car. Then they started whispering again, and I couldn't hear a word they said. Didn't want to. I was as hungry as a wolf, and there was a jolly good breakfast on the table. I sat down and gorged. I had just started my third egg when the door opened, and a rather nice-looking young fellow walked in. The footman came behind him, looking as white as a sheet, and began some sort of apology for letting the stranger in. Old Dopping, who was still in a pretty bad temper, told the footman to go. Then the new man introduced himself. He said he was Colonel O'Connell, of the first Armagh Regiment of National Volunteers. I expected to see old Dopping kill him at sight. Dopping is a tremendous loyalist, and the other fellow—well—phew!"

Sam whistled. Words failed him, I suppose, when it came to expressing the disloyalty of a colonel of National Volunteers.

"Instead of that," said Sam, "Dopping stood up straight, and saluted O'Connell. O'Connell stiffened his back, and saluted Dopping. The third man, the one I didn't know, stood up, too, and saluted. O'Connell saluted him. Then the governor bowed quite civilly, and O'Connell saluted him. I can tell you it was a pretty scene. 'I beg to inform you, gentlemen,' said O'Connell, 'that a consignment of rifles and ammunition, apparently intended for your force, has arrived at our headquarters in a motor lorry.' Nothing could have been civilier than the way he spoke. But Dopping was not to be beat.

He's a bristly old bear at times, but he always was a gentleman. 'Owing to a mistake,' he said, 'some arms, evidently belonging to you, are now in a car at our door.' The governor and the other man sat down and laughed till they were purple, but neither O'Connell nor old Dopping so much as smiled. It was then—and I give you my word not till then—that I tumbled to the idea that I'd been running guns for the other side. I expected that there'd be a furious row the minute the governor stopped laughing. But there wasn't. In fact, no one took any notice of me. There was a long consultation, and in the end they settled that it might be risky to start moving the guns about again, and that each party had better stick to what it had got. Our fellows—I call them our fellows, though, of course, I was really acting for the others—our fellows got rather the better of the exchange in the way of ammunition. But O'Connell scooped in a lot of extra rifles. When they had that settled they all saluted again, and the governor said something about hoping to meet O'Connell at Philippi. I don't know what he meant by that, but O'Connell seemed tremendously pleased. Where do you suppose Philippi is?"

"Philippi," I said, "is where somebody—Julius Cæsar, I think, but it doesn't matter——. What your father meant was that he hoped to have a chance of fighting it out with O'Connell some day.

Not a duel, you know, but a proper battle. The Ulster Volunteers against the other lot."

"We shall have to wipe out the police first," said Sam, "to prevent their interfering. I hope I shall be there then. I want to get my own back out of those fellows who collared me from behind the day of the last rag. But, I say, what about the soldiers—the regular soldiers, I mean? Which side will they be on?"

"That," I said, "is the one uncertain factor in the problem. Nobody knows."

"The best plan," said Sam, "would be to take them away altogether, and leave us to settle the matter ourselves. We'd do it all right, judging by the way old Dopping and O'Connell behaved to each other."

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. I should never have suspected Sam of profound political wisdom. But it is quite possible that his suggestion would meet the case better than any other.

## XII.—THE DESPATCH RIDER

THE motor-car stood palpitating outside the doors of the Town Hall at Ballygore. Its powerful headlights glared at the crowd which blocked the road in front of it. Beyond the limit of their range, on each side of the car and behind it, the crowd was denser still. Lawrence O'Kevin, bareheaded, descended the steps of the hall accompanied by three gentlemen also bareheaded. The crowd cheered. O'Kevin waved his hand, put on his hat, took it off again and waved it. Then he stepped into the car. The crowd cheered more enthusiastically. The driver, sitting at the steering wheel of the car, blew several warning blasts on his horn. The crowd, refusing to be warned, continued to cheer. O'Kevin stood up.

"God save Ireland," he said.

"And damn the Orangemen," said some one.

The crowd cheered both sentiments with vigour. The driver, who no doubt wanted to get home to bed, threw a note of impatient anger into the hooting of his horn. He started the car and O'Kevin sat down abruptly. That part of the crowd which was in front of the car scattered right and left. The cheering was continued by those whose limbs were safe. O'Kevin leaned forward and waved his hat.



In a few minutes the car was clear of the crowd and clear of the streets of the town. It sped at a high pace along the empty country roads. O'Kevin leaned back and closed his eyes.

"I wish," he murmured, "that it were not absolutely necessary to damn the Orangemen."

Lawrence O'Kevin was a Member of Parliament, and one of the leading figures in the Irish Nationalist Party. All successful politicians are politicians by nature. They are born with a taste for making speeches and it is in them to enjoy intrigue. But most of them belong to one party or the other by mere accident. They would be just as happy, just as effective, if the dice of circumstance had fallen the other way up and they had found themselves members of the opposite party. Lawrence O'Kevin was an exception to this rule. He was a Nationalist, just as he was a politician, by nature. It was impossible to imagine him a Unionist.

Yet even Lawrence O'Kevin was thankful when his speech was over. Ballygore is one of those danger spots on the borders of Protestant Ulster where the numbers of the two parties are very nearly equal. The Nationalists had for nearly a year watched their opponents drilling and arming. They were quite of opinion that it was time for them to do the same. When O'Kevin, the trusted lieutenant of their trusted leader, advised them to do the very thing they wanted to do their enthusiasm was unbounded. Never in the whole course of his life

had O'Kevin held a more successful meeting. Yet, when it was all over and the car in which he sat was racing through the cool night air, he leaned back and thanked Heaven.

The fact is that it is not only the round men in the square holes who are discontented with their lot. The fortunate few who, being round, get into round holes are ultimately worried by the want of angles in their lives. A surgeon may have, ought to have, a natural love for cutting out appendices; but if he is kept at it by fate, obliged to cut them out at the rate of a hundred a year for a quarter of a century, he begins to wish that he were something else, a market gardener or an ambassador, anything except a surgeon. O'Kevin had made, on an average, two hundred speeches a year for thirty years, all of them on Home Rule, and he had reached the point of regarding each one as a milestone passed on a somewhat weary road. He might—he was fifty-five years of age—have to make as many as three thousand more. But he was a philosopher. He knew that each time he spoke reduced the number of speeches before him by one, and that in the end he would certainly reach his last speech.

O'Kevin had a long drive before him and plenty of time for meditation. He allowed his mind to range over the chances which life offers to a man of moderate means and some intelligence, if he does not happen to be born an orator and forced by fate to spend his time talking. He dwelt for some time

on the joys of money-making. Then he thought of the people who go adventuring, who discover bits of Central Africa or rivers in Brazil. Finally, for he was a man of kindly heart, he came to the conclusion that the life of a philanthropist must be the happiest of all. He did not, indeed, wish to sit on any of the committees which devise means of annoying harmless people in order to improve their habits or their health. His dream was of doing kindly acts unexpectedly, to men, women, and especially children, who might be in need of a benefactor. He sighed. The dream was a dream and no more. A man needs ample leisure to be a philanthropist of that sort. Perhaps only the country parsons and the smaller landed gentry have leisure enough. And indeed that kind of well-doing is out of fashion everywhere.

O'Kevin was roused from his dream by a series of short, furious hoots from the motor-horn. The car swerved sharply and went sideways into a ditch. O'Kevin was jerked from his seat and found himself sitting, unhurt, but a good deal crumpled up, on the floor of the tonneau. He heard the driver swearing fluently. A "—— motor-bike"—he picked out the fact from a bewildering shower of profanity—was lying, without a sign of a light on it, in the middle of the road.

The next thing O'Kevin heard was the voice of a girl.

"It's all my fault," she said; "I know it's all my fault, and now somebody is killed."

Then she sobbed. O'Kevin could hear the sobs distinctly. So, apparently, could the driver, for he stopped swearing. O'Kevin climbed out of the car. He found a girl sitting beside the ruin of a motor-bicycle weeping bitterly. For a moment he was doubtful whether it was a girl. She was dressed in a boy's Norfolk jacket and a pair of tweed knickerbockers much too big for her. The driver, who had turned the light of one of the lamps on her figure, was deceived. He began to swear again. But O'Kevin caught sight of a long mane of yellow hair, and felt sure that his first guess was the right one. He told the driver to stop swearing at once. He went over to the girl and picked her up.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

She stopped sobbing and looked up at him.

"No," she said, "not a bit; but the machine is in flitters. You know what I mean by flitters, don't you? Little bits. And I don't know what to do."

"Let me take you home," said O'Kevin. "My car's all right. Where do you live?"

"I can't go home," said the girl. "Tom would kill me if I did. Besides—well, I can't, yet."

O'Kevin thought over the position for a minute or two.

"Is it Tom's bicycle?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "and Tom's my brother."



O'Kevin felt that he understood the matter thoroughly. The opportunity he had dreamed of, the opportunity for doing an unexpected, irregular act of kindness, had come to him without his spending any time in seeking it. He was fifty-five years of age. The girl beside him was plainly little more than a child. He patted her head.

"Don't be afraid, my dear," he said. "Tom shall have a new bicycle. I'll give him one. But I hope that you'll be more careful in future." He was beginning to realise the full pleasure of benevolent fatherliness. "You mustn't take Tom's bicycle again without asking leave."

"Good gracious!" said the girl. "He sent me on the bicycle himself, and he won't mind it's being smashed, at least not much. That's not the reason I won't go home."

O'Kevin felt puzzled. He had evidently failed to grasp the situation. But the glow of kindly intention by no means died in him.

"Would you mind telling me," he said, "what I can do for you?"

The girl looked at him carefully. She scanned him from head to foot. Then she glanced at the car which the driver had succeeded in backing out of the ditch.

"You look like a gentleman," she said. "Are you?"

O'Kevin was a Member of Parliament. That gave

him a plain right to call himself a gentleman. But he was a modest man.

"I hope so," he said.

"Then I expect," said the girl, "that it will be all right to tell you. It's despatches."

"Despatches!" said O'Kevin.

For a moment he did not realise exactly what she meant. He had spent the evening enrolling an army, but he had not yet reached the stage of putting it on a war footing. Then he recollected that the other army, the opposition one, was very completely organised, and was, according to the reports in the daily papers, particularly rich in despatch riders. The assumption that if he were a gentleman he must be in full sympathy with the Ulster Volunteers nettled him a little.

"Surely," he said, "they don't send little girls like you to carry despatches."

"Oh, no," she said. "I'm only in the Ambulance Corps, learning to nurse the wounded, you know. Tom is a despatch-rider. But poor Tom sprained his ankle yesterday, and so when the despatches came he sent me with them."

"But your mother—" said O'Kevin, "and your father, what do they think?"

"They don't exactly know. But mother won't really mind, and father—well, father is the Colonel, you know. I'm carrying the despatches to him. He'll be furious, of course, but he'll get over it."

He'd be much more furious if the despatches didn't arrive."

"Where is your father?" said O'Kevin.

"Head Quarters, Ballygore."

"Very well. Get into my car. It must be over twenty miles, but——"

"Will you really? How perfectly sweet of you; but of course you may be a Volunteer yourself and then you'd want to. Are you?"

"Yes," said O'Kevin, quite truthfully.

"I thought you must be," said the girl, "when I saw you were a gentleman. And would you mind taking this." She fumbled in the pocket of her jacket—evidently Tom's jacket—and drew out a revolver. "I'm so awfully afraid of its going off. It's in case of meeting any Nationalists, you know; and of course if I did meet one I'd shoot."

Remembering that despatches are often of vital importance, O'Kevin told his driver to go back to Ballygore as quickly as possible. The twenty miles were covered in an hour. Most of the inhabitants of the town had gone to bed. In one window alone there was a light burning.

"Here we are," said the girl.

"I'll wait for you," said O'Kevin, "and drive you home."

The girl ran into the office. In ten minutes she was out again followed by a middle-aged man. He approached O'Kevin.

"I won't trouble you to drive my little girl home,"

he said. "But I want to thank you for your kindness to her. She oughtn't to have been running about the country on a motor-bicycle at night by herself. But under the circumstances—well she has delivered her despatches, thanks to your kindness. May I hope that you will lunch with us to-morrow? My name is Daintree, Cecil Daintree."

"Mine is O'Kevin."

"O'Kevin! But—but—but— Surely not *the* Mr. O'Kevin."

"Well, yes, I suppose I may call myself *the* Mr. O'Kevin. I was in Ballygore earlier in the evening. I daresay you heard about it. I was forming a corps of Nationalist Volunteers."

"But my daughter—my daughter told me——"

"That I was a gentleman? I'm sorry for the mistake."

"Most extraordinary thing I ever heard in my life, but of course—Sir," he held out his hand as he spoke, "I'm delighted to hear that you're training up your fellows to fight like men. If only those politicians would stop talking and let us settle the matter, like gentlemen, sir, like gentlemen."

"I'm afraid," said O'Kevin, "that I am also one of the politicians."

Mr. Daintree jerked his head back and swallowed with an evident effort. Then he seized O'Kevin's hand.

"Never mind, sir, never mind. Any man may find himself in a doubtful position, any man. But



you're doing your best to get out of it, and no man can do more than that. Mr. O'Kevin, those despatches didn't matter a pin's head. There wasn't anything in them. But I'll not forget what you've done for my little girl to-night, and if ever, in the future, you know, any of your despatch riders happen to break down, I'll——"

"Help them out?"

"I'll give orders to our fellows," said Daintree, "to take the despatches straight to you."

### XIII.—THE HIGHWAYMAN

“**E**DIE,” said the dean, “don’t you think we might stop here for tea?”

The hill in front of them was long. Dean Waterson could not see the top of it because the road twisted, but he knew it was long because he had looked it out beforehand on the cyclist’s map which he carried. It was also steep.

“Oh, Uncle John!” said Edie.

Her voice expressed disappointment. She was very eager to catch a glimpse of the unknown land beyond the hill. The steepness did not affect her.

“Let us go on a little further,” she pleaded.

But the dean was determined. He dismounted and laid his bicycle on the side of the road. He had already ridden much further than he wanted to. The duties of a dean are not a good preparation for a cycling tour in company with an energetic girl of eighteen years old. Dean Waterson was over fifty, and the calves of his legs, though shapely, were soft.

“The view here,” he said, “is very fine.”

Edie looked round. Her uncle was right about the view. They had climbed a hundred feet or so, and the narrow water of Killary Bay lay below them. Behind it rose the mountains, green, purple,

and glorious. Far out to the west, half veiled in a sunlit haze, was the Atlantic. The dean took off his hat and wiped his forehead. Then he dusted his legs carefully. Knee breeches, buttoning tightly, and black cloth gaiters are not the best wear in the world for cycling. It was the first day of a carefully planned tour, and the dean was already regretting that he had undertaken it. He blamed himself for not staying quietly at home. He blamed Edie for riding faster than any lady ought to ride. He blamed his sister for sending this very inconvenient niece to spend a summer holiday with him.

Edie unpacked the tea things from their satchel and set the kettle to boil on its little spirit stove. Then she looked round her with a sigh of deep appreciation. A summer term in Trinity Hall and honour lectures in Modern Literature, with an occasional tea-party in "The Elizabethan" by way of recreation, lead to a full enjoyment of a cycling tour in Connemara.

"How splendid it must have been for those old knights," she said, "who used to 'ride through the world redressing human wrongs.' Wouldn't you have liked to live then, Uncle John?"

The dean was not sure. The old knights rode on horses and not bicycles, and so, presumably, hills did not trouble them. Yet their life must have been physically laborious.

"Of course," said Edie, "you'd have been an abbot, not a knight. I should have been a knight,

and when I begged for hospitality at your monastery I should have told you my adventures. I wish we could have an adventure now, Uncle John, but I suppose we shan't."

"The kind of thing you have in your mind," he said, "is most unlikely to happen now. Dragons are almost extinct."

The dean had a pretty wit. His jokes often won the applause of Canons after dinner. The allusion to dragons was in quite his happiest vein, and just suited to the intelligence of Edie. Unfortunately she did not seem to appreciate it.

"I don't suppose that we shall even meet a highwayman," she said.

A heavy vehicle, pushing two jaded horses in front of it, came creaking and groaning down the hill. A "shoe" brake, pressing hard against one of the back wheels, gave a kind of hoarse shriek now and then. The driver sat hunched up on the front seat, the reins hanging loosely from his hands. Beside him, and in three rows behind him, sat tourists, obviously tired and hungry but trying to look at the view before them with intelligent appreciation. Nothing could be less romantic than their appearance. Nothing could have suggested the adventurous joys of knights errant or the depredations of highwaymen less than this *char-à-banc*. Edie turned from it with disgust. Her kettle boiled. A few minutes later she handed a cup of tea to her uncle and pressed him to help himself to some



crumbly fragments of biscuits from a paper bag.

The dean, who was very thirsty, drank three cups of tea, then after a short apology to Edie, he lit his pipe. He rarely, so he assured her, smoked except in his study in the deanery. But on a cycling tour certain liberties are permissible, and there was no one, except Edie, to see him. A minute later he took the pipe out of his mouth and put it into his pocket. As a dean he was bound to uphold the reputation of the clergy for propriety of behaviour, and there was a man coming down the hill. The dean gazed at him with some astonishment. He was unusually tall, very thin, and, though plainly quite young, wore a beard. He was running down the hill, dragging a bicycle with him. This was curious. If the man were in a hurry, why did he not ride the bicycle? If he were not in a hurry, why did he run? The stranger himself offered an explanation. He stopped abruptly, glanced at the dean's bicycle, and then dropped his own.

"Punctured," he panted, "both wheels—quite flat—must get on—return it all right—excuse me."

He picked up the dean's bicycle as he spoke, mounted it quickly and sped down the hill. He looked over his shoulder as he went and shouted something. Only two words were audible—"My wife."

The dean gazed after him in silent amazement until he disappeared. Then he opened his mouth and said:

"Well, I'm——."

He had been thirty years in Holy Orders, and during that time he had never once sworn. Even under the emotional excitement of this moment he had sufficient self-command to stop before uttering the third word.

"Uncle John," said Edie. "He's a highwayman, and he's stolen your bicycle. I'll go after him and get it back."

Her eyes were sparkling with excitement. An adventure of a very thrilling kind was offering itself quite unexpectedly. She pulled on her gloves and ran to her bicycle.

"Edie," said the dean, "come back at once. I can't allow you——"

But Edie was not to be turned from her purpose. She fumbled for a moment in her tool bag, drew out a repair outfit and laid it on the ground.

"You mend those punctures, Uncle John, and then come after me. I'll get the bicycle, and keep it till you turn up."

The dean struggled to his feet. He was stiff and tired, but he made a brave effort to reach his niece before she mounted her bicycle. He was late by half a minute. She waved her hand to him as she rushed down the hill. This time, being absolutely alone, the dean completed the sentence he had begun before. The utterance of the forbidden word gave him a curious glow of satisfaction. It even seemed to restore his spirit and energy. He picked up the

repair outfit which his niece had left him, and turned to the discarded bicycle.

The dean understood, theoretically, how to mend a punctured tyre. He had even done it once, with help. But his hands were soft and the cover of the stranger's tyre was particularly stiff. He broke both his thumb nails and covered himself with dust from head to foot, but he failed to detach it. After working hard for a quarter of an hour, he swore again, loudly. As he did so he became aware that he was overheard. An elderly lady, holding a bicycle, was standing beside him frowning heavily. Her face was naturally adapted for the expression of stern disapproval. It was thin, heavily lined, pale, and there was a well-marked moustache above her lip. She looked at the dean through pince-nez which were perched on the bridge of a hooked nose.

"I stopped," she said, "to see if I could be of any assistance to you. But after hearing the expression you have just used, I shall not——." She stopped abruptly. The dean stood up and began to apologise. She interrupted him at once.

"How dare you speak to me," she said, "when you've stolen my husband's bicycle?"

"If," said the dean, "that young man who passed here half an hour ago is your husband, I must inform you, madam, that he has stolen my bicycle."

The lady pointed a finger at the machine, which lay upturned on the road.

"Appearances are very much against you," she

said. "I shall ride on at once to the nearest police barrack. If you clear your character later on, I shall, of course, be very glad. But, judging from the language I've just heard you use, I think it quite likely that you are a common thief."

She mounted her bicycle as she spoke, and rode down the hill. The dean stared after her. He was very much irritated by her remarks. It is the duty of the clergy, especially of the higher clergy, bishops, archdeacons, and deans, to rebuke the laity for doing wrong, and even at times, to threaten them with unpleasant consequences. In this case the natural order of things had been reversed. A lay person, a woman, had rebuked the dean and actually spoken of delivering him over to the secular power on a charge of theft. This was most disquieting. Coming on top of the other annoyances of the day, the long ride, the loss of his bicycle, and the flight of his niece, it upset the dean's temper completely. He kicked the punctured bicycle angrily, and set off walking down the hill.

He walked two miles and then he met a policeman, a rosy-faced, cheerful young man, whose natural gentleness of disposition had evidently not been soured by his intercourse with the criminal classes. He saluted the dean respectfully.

"Begging your reverence's pardon for asking," he said, "but might it be you that found another gentleman's bicycle on the side of the road?"

The gaunt lady had evidently carried out her



threat and complained to the police. This was the constable's polite way of approaching a delicate subject.

"There was a lady beyond at the barrack," he went on, "that was saying to the sergeant——"

The dean interrupted him.

"Did you see a young man," he said, "about an hour ago, a tall young man with a thin beard, riding a bicycle with a nickel-plated acetylene lamp and a luggage carrier?"

"I did not," said the constable, "but——"

"That young man has stolen my bicycle," said the dean, "and must be arrested at once."

The constable scratched his head.

"William Clancy," he said, "the same that does be doing odd jobs for the gentlemen when they are fishing, was telling me a while ago that he seen a young man of the sort, and says he——"

"Then go and arrest him at once," said the dean.

The constable took off his cap and scratched his head again.

"It wasn't long after," he said, "when there came a young lady on a bicycle—a fine girl she was—riding as if the devil was after her—saving your reverence's presence—and says she to me, 'Did you see a young man,' says she, 'and him on a bicycle with a nickel-plated lamp on the front and a——?'"

"My niece," said the dean.

"She might," said the constable, cautiously.

"Anyway I didn't see the man she was after, and so I couldn't tell her which way he was gone."

"And which way did she go?"

"They were telling me," said the constable, "that she took the turn before you come to Glen-a-Gimla, like as if she was heading for Maam; but from what William Clancy was telling me it was in the direction of Westport that the young man went, so it's not likely that she got him."

"Thanks," said the dean, "I must hurry on. I shall have to telegraph——"

"Maybe now," said the constable, "it might be as well for you to know about the other lady, the one that came into the barrack and told the sergeant that you'd found a bicycle that might be the one that her husband had lost."

"No, thank you," said the dean, "I don't in the least want to hear about her."

"She's there this minute," said the constable.

"Where?"

"In the post office, sending telegrams."

The dean hesitated. The constable, forgetting the respect due to the Church, winked.

"I wouldn't say," he said, "that she's in just what you'd call a sweet temper. She was bad enough at the beginning, but when the sergeant told her there was a fine-looking young girl out after the man she was looking for, she got mad entirely."

"That young lady," said the dean, severely, "is my niece; and she wasn't after the man."

"She might not; but it looked mighty like as if she was."

"Not in the way you mean; nothing would be further——"

"What the sergeant said to me after," said the constable, "was that them old ones when they're foolish enough to marry young men—and from what William Clancy told me that fellow might have been her son—must expect the like and nobody'd pity them."

"This," said the dean, "is outrageous and scandalous. I won't have my niece's name——"

"The sergeant told me," said the constable, "that what the old lady wanted was to off after the two of them, and off she'd have been, only that he disremembered whether it was the young man that went to Westport and the young lady to Maam; or the young lady to Westport and the young man to Maam; or whether the two of them went the one way and which way it was. The talk she went on with when she heard that had the sergeant's temper riz so that he went very near telling her to take the road to Louisburgh."

"I wish he had," said the dean vindictively.

"It could be," said the constable with fine impartiality, "that it would have been better if he had. She'd have been out of your reverence's way then; but the way things is at the present time I don't know but what you'd be better not meeting her. She has it in for you about the bicycle, saying you

stole it, though anybody'd know your reverence wouldn't do the like; and when she hears that the young lady that's after her husband is your niece——”

“I forbid you to mention my niece again,” said the dean peremptorily. He turned his back on the constable and walked in a rapid and dignified way towards Leenane. He was not clear in his own mind about what he meant to do when he got there; but he was quite determined not to stand any longer in the middle of the road listening to scandalous suggestions about his niece. The constable hesitated. Duty was calling him in two different directions. There was a derelict bicycle somewhere on the road of which he ought to take possession. There was also a probability of a serious breach of the peace when the grey-haired lady met the dean in the post office. He decided in the end to go back to Leenane. Being very much the better walker of the two, he soon overtook the dean.

“The young man,” he began, in an easy conversational tone, “had a notion that there was a bag belonging to him that had been put into the brake at Letterfrack in mistake, and he wanted it back.”

The constable walked on the right of the dean, respectfully, about a yard behind. The dean, in order to give the impression that he was not listening, turned his head to the left and stared angrily at the bay.

“He was terribly anxious about the bag, so he



was," said the constable, "for when he found that it wasn't in the hotel, he took it into his head that it was gone on to Westport on a car along with a gentleman who wanted to catch the night mail for Dublin."

The dean twisted his shoulders as well as his head towards the side of the road, and walked as quickly as it is possible to walk sideways.

"It was on account of that that he went on to Westport, hoping to overtake the car, and I wouldn't say but he might have come up with it somewhere on this side of Eriff, for from that William Clancy told me, he was riding fast."

They turned the last corner of the road, and came in sight of the hotel and the post office. The dean, with a sense of relief, turned his head straight and looked in front of him.

"It's herself right enough," said the constable.

It was. The grey-haired lady was standing in the middle of the road talking with considerable animation to the young man who had taken the dean's bicycle.

"I'm blessed," said the constable, "if she hasn't got him after all. And the young lady has missed him, which is what doesn't surprise me, seeing she went the wrong road after him."

The dean pulled himself together with an effort, smoothed his apron carefully, and walked on in a dignified way.

"I wouldn't wonder now," said the constable,

"but she might be asking him who the young lady was. She has all the look of it."

The young man caught sight of the dean and stepped forward. He held his cap in one hand, with the other he led the stolen bicycle.

"I owe you an apology," he said politely, "a very sincere apology. The fact is, that a bag of ours, a bag containing my wife's evening dress——"

"This is my bicycle," said the dean, stiffly.

"Certainly," said the young man.

"Eusebius!" said the lady.

"Yes, my dear."

"Allow me," said the dean, "to resume possession of my own bicycle."

"Not till you give my husband his," said the lady.

"The whole thing is a trifling misunderstanding," said the young man. "I was in pursuit of the bag. Yes, yes, by all means take your bicycle. My dear, I cannot possibly refuse—after all I was in the wrong. But under the circumstances I am sure, sir, that you will understand——"

"My niece took the road to Maam, didn't she?" said the dean to the constable.

"And it turns out, I needn't have gone," said Eusebius, "for the bag was at Letterfrack all the time."

The dean had one foot on the step of his bicycle and was hopping rapidly along the road. He always had a difficulty in mounting.

"My wife rode after me," said Eusebius, raising his voice, "to tell me that the bag was found shortly after I left Letterfrack. Please allow me to apologise. Why are you in such a hurry? Surely——"

The dean was in the saddle, gathering speed at every turn of the pedals.

"He's after the young lady," said the constable, "that was after you. A fine young lady she was as any you'd see."

He watched the dean as he spoke. Eusebius continued to his wife the apology he had meant to make to the dean.

"I can't think how I came to do it," he said. "The sight of his bicycle lying on the side of the road tempted me, I suppose. I meant to have it back in ten minutes. I knew the *char-à-banc* couldn't be far in front of me. I——"

"Be jabbers, but he has her," said the constable, who was watching the dean. "It's herself that's coming down the hill towards him. I'd know her out of a thousand."

Edie dismounted breathlessly in front of the dean.

"Oh, Uncle John!" she said. "You've got it back safe. And I rode miles and miles after the man. I tracked him along the road by the marks of his tyres in the dust; until all of a sudden I noticed that there weren't any tracks. Then I came back intending to start afresh. I should not have let him escape. How did you catch him?"

"Edie," said the dean, "I understand—that is

to say I imagine—that these people, Eusebius and his wife, are going back to Letterfrack. They are most objectionable people. We shall stop here for the night so as to avoid falling in with them again.”

“Certainly, Uncle John,” said Edie. “But oh! wasn’t it glorious? Just as you said that we should have no adventures this one happened. I never knew anything so splendid. Just fancy! A real highwayman! Perhaps to-morrow we shall meet another. Don’t you hope so?”

“If we do,” said the dean, “we shall go straight home without finishing our tour.”



#### XIV.—TURQUOISE AND PEARL

**I** SHALL count on you," said Mrs. Danton; "you must dine with us every night while That will be three nights beginning with to-morrow. You will take her in to dinner, of course."

"I can't possibly——" I began.

"You must," said Mrs. Danton, smiling in the delightful way in which Mrs. Danton does smile. "You really must. You know what our party is. We fish, every one of us, men and women. We think and talk of nothing else, whereas you are a clever man, the only clever man in the neighbourhood."

I should not venture to call myself a clever man, though I won a Hebrew prize when I was in college, a second prize; and since then have done a little work at old Gaelic. Indeed I published a paper some time ago in "The Philologist" on the connection between Gaelic and Sanskrit. I could not flatter myself that Mrs. Danton knew anything about either Gaelic or Sanskrit, and I was quite unreasonably pleased to hear her call me clever. Nobody else in the world recognises my ability, except my sister Margaret, who lives with me; and she admires me, so to speak, from a distance in an uneducated and uninspiring way. Mrs. Danton has

always been nice to me since I first knew her, and whether she knew anything about Sanskrit or not I appreciated her way of calling me clever. I would do a good deal to please Mrs. Danton.

"Besides," she went on, "Lady Egerton said in her letter that Miss Bently particularly wanted to meet you. It was Lady Egerton who insisted on me having her here. I couldn't well refuse, you know, because she's Tom's aunt."

I knew beforehand that it was Lady Egerton and not Miss Bently who was the aunt, and so I was not confused by Mrs. Danton's use of the pronouns.

"Tom is furious, of course," she said. "He can't bear literary women; but I couldn't help myself."

Tom is Mrs. Danton's husband. He fishes when they come over here in the summer. What he does at the other seasons of the year when he is elsewhere, I do not know. Very likely he shoots and hunts. I could quite easily believe that he would have little or nothing in common with a literary lady. I did not expect to have much in common with her myself. I doubted very much whether my Hebrew and Gaelic would help me.

"Her name," said Mrs. Danton, "is Rose, Rose Bently. I looked her out in Mudie's list, and I find that she's written a novel called 'Turquoise and Pearl.' You've read it perhaps."

She looked at me in a curious way as she spoke. If I had not known Mrs. Danton as a woman of the world whose self-possession it was impossible to

shake, I should have thought she felt a little shy in making the suggestion that I had read "Turquoise and Pearl."

"No," I said, "I've never even heard of it."

"I haven't read it, of course," she said. "But there's been a lot of talk about it. The men had it in the smoking-room at Deeside when we were there for the cock-shooting. I believe it's—well, it's not exactly the sort of book a woman would care to read."

"I'm sorry," I said firmly, "but I cannot possibly dine with you to-morrow night."

I am the curate of the parish. I felt that I could not possibly face Miss Rose Bently. I am not, I trust, prejudiced or narrow-minded; but, as a clergyman, I do not feel that I am the proper man to cope with an emancipated lady novelist. I failed altogether to guess why Miss Bently should want to see me.

"It will be all right," said Mrs. Danton. "She won't talk that way. Lady Egerton would not have sent her here if she was in the least—in fact, now I have found out what she wrote, I'm rather surprised that Lady Egerton did send her here. As a rule Lady Egerton is quite the opposite, quite; almost too much so. She disapproves dreadfully of poor Tom. You needn't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid," I said untruthfully. Mrs. Danton was smiling and seemed inclined to laugh outright. "The fact is that Margaret, my sister

Margaret, promised that we'd go up to tea at the Rectory to-morrow night."

"Put them off," said Mrs. Danton, "and bring Margaret with you. She'll be one woman too many, but I'll fit her in."

Margaret would, I knew, detest being "fitted in." She has a high sense of personal dignity. She also dislikes Mrs. Danton because she imagines that Mrs. Danton patronises her. This is quite a mistake, and I used to tell her so at first. I do not press my contradiction now, because she has a theory which she puts into plain words, that Mrs. Danton makes a fool of me and winds me round her finger.

"I'm sure," I said, "that Margaret won't break her engagement."

"I shall be sorry if she doesn't," said Mrs. Danton. "She would have helped me with Miss Bently after dinner. But I shall count on you. After all it's simply your duty to come. Isn't it? As a clergyman, I mean."

I did not quite see how my duty as a clergyman came into the matter, but I had no doubt about my inclination. I felt shy of Miss Bently, but I reflected that I should have somebody else on the other side of me at dinner, and tea at the Rectory is really a very dull entertainment. I promised to do my best with Miss Bently.

Margaret, as I expected, flatly refused to dine with the Dantons. She said that if she was wanted she ought to have been asked properly. She even



objected to my going. I pointed out to her that I was asked to meet a lady of great literary eminence, and that the invitation, coming as it did at the special request of the lady herself, was most flattering. Margaret sniffed. I went on to explain that my opportunities for intellectual intercourse with clever people were very few and that it would be a great pleasure to me to meet Miss Rose Bently. I brought out the name rather anxiously, sincerely hoping that Margaret had never heard of "Turquoise and Pearl." She never had. Indeed, when I put the matter that way, she took rather a nice view of it. Margaret is really fond of me, and has a high opinion of my scholarship. She thinks that here in Connemara I am a kind of unrecognised genius pining in a wilderness.

"Of course," she said, "if Miss Bently is really a clever woman——"

"She is," I said. "Amazingly clever. Mrs. Danton says so."

Margaret sniffed again.

"If you've only got Mrs. Danton's word for it——"

"Of course," I explained, "Mrs. Danton doesn't say it on her own authority. She is simply repeating the opinion current in—in London and other places."

"Very well," said Margaret. "If she really is a clever woman I don't want to deprive you of the chance of talking to her. But I won't go."



Thus it happened, very much I imagine to Mrs. Danton's relief, that I went up to dinner without Margaret. I arrived early and sat for some minutes alone in the drawing-room. Then Mrs. Danton rushed in with a charming apology for not being downstairs to receive me.

"I wrote for the book," she said, "directly I was sure she was coming. I wish I had had it yesterday, so that you could have read it before you met her; but it didn't come till this afternoon. Here it is."

She fished a book in a red cover out of a drawer in her writing table.

"I kept it hidden," she said, "so that Tom shouldn't get hold of it. If he did, he'd make jokes. You know Tom's sort of joke?"

I did, and urged her to conceal the book again.

"I can't read it now," I said. "There wouldn't be time. I'm not sure that I care to read it at all."

"Oh, it will be all right for you," said Mrs. Danton. "Nobody could object to your reading it—as a clergyman, I mean."

Mrs. Danton has a peculiar view, all her own, of the clerical office. I am never quite sure what she will expect me to do or say "as a clergyman."

"Keep off the subject as well as you can for to-night," said Mrs. Danton, "and read it to-morrow. Then you'll be able to talk to her about it."

A lady entered the room.

"Miss Bently," said Mrs. Danton. "How nice of you to be down in such good time after your

journey. Let me introduce Mr. Meres to you. I know you're longing to meet him, and he is looking forward to a great talk with you about books and literature and art and music, and everything that we poor ordinary people know nothing about."

Miss Bently is quite a good-looking girl. I thought beforehand that she might be good-looking in a handsome, showy style. I did not expect her to be a girl. As a matter of fact she looked little more than a child. I should have put her down at the first glance as about eighteen years old. She wore a very plain white dress, and had large, innocent-looking eyes. I reflected that appearances are extraordinarily deceptive things. Miss Bently did not look as if she could possibly have written the sort of book which would shock Mrs. Danton. Mrs. Danton, being Tom's wife, is not at all easily shocked. I commented on the length of the drive from the station, and the extremely unsatisfactory nature of our train service, while the rest of the party dribbled into the room. There were eight of them altogether, without counting Tom, who was late. They were all fishing people: a fishing Colonel, with a wife and daughter who fished; a fishing stock-broker, with a wife who was an enthusiast about salmon; an elderly Miss Danton, Tom's sister; a London barrister, the butt of the party, because he never caught anything; and a non-descript boy, who was, I understood, reading for

Sandhurst. No one showed the least wish to interrupt my conversation with Miss Bently.

We trooped in to dinner, and I found myself between Miss Danton and Miss Bently. This sealed my fate. Miss Danton does not like me. She does not, I believe, like anyone whom her sister-in-law does like. I knew she would not talk to me under any circumstances. I pulled myself together and devoted my attention to Miss Bently.

"Is this," I asked, "your first visit to Ireland?"

"Yes. I spent two weeks last summer in the Hebrides, North Uist; and this spring I was in Brittany. I was determined to visit Ireland next."

"And what do you think of us?" I asked.

She looked at me with a mild surprise in her eyes. I felt that the question was banal, and hastened to redeem myself.

"I met a lady once," I said, "who was paying her first visit to Ireland. She told me that the thing which surprised her most was that Irishmen never fall in love."

This was not strictly true. I did not meet that lady myself. It was Tom Danton who met her, and told me afterwards what she said. But I thought the remark was a good one to make to Miss Bently. The authoress of "*Turquoise and Pearl*," supposing it to be the kind of book Mrs. Danton said it was, ought to be interested in this peculiarity of Irishmen. I fully expected Miss Bently to say something brilliant in reply. I was disappointed. All she said was:

"Indeed."

I tried again.

"I suppose," I said, "that it isn't simply for pleasure that you have come here. You are probably hard at work."

"Indeed I am," she said. "I spent the last fortnight in the Aran Islands."

"Ah," I said, "local colour. Isn't that the phrase? You couldn't have gone to a better place for it."

Then to my surprise she began to talk about the Irish language. It is still spoken in great purity by the Aran Islanders. I was still more surprised when I found that she appeared to know something about the subject. She quoted, to my absolute astonishment, the opinions of Professor Windlesheim, of Heidelberg, on some points of Gaelic philology. In the course of our conversation I gathered that she herself was half German and that the Professor was her uncle. I am ashamed to say that I forgot all about her literary work, and allowed myself to be seduced into giving her a sort of lecture on ancient Gaelic and its connection with the early Aryan languages. Before the ladies left us, I had promised to take her next day to see some stones with Ogam inscriptions in a remote corner of the parish.

Afterwards, while Tom Danton, the Colonel, the stock-broker, the barrister, and the boy were telling each other fishing stories of extraordinarily imaginative power, I reflected on Miss Bently. My sister Margaret, who of course understands such matters



much better than I do, has often told me that any intelligent woman can make a fool of any man.

"All she has to do," so Margaret says, "is to pretend to be interested in his particular hobby until she starts him talking about it. Then she need only smile and he will think her charming."

Margaret is very wise. I leaped to the conclusion that Miss Bently had played this trick on me. I rather resented it, but was forced to admit that she had done it uncommonly well. I should not have believed beforehand that any one could have successfully pretended to possess a knowledge of ancient Irish.

As I was saying good-night Mrs. Danton slipped "Turquoise and Pearl" into my hand. I took the book up to bed with me, and although I had to go downstairs between one and two for a fresh candle, I finished it before I went to sleep. It was worse, considerably worse, than any novel I had ever read. I have in my time studied the classic poets. I have also read the early fathers of the Church. "Turquoise and Pearl," without being so plain-spoken as either the poets or the theologians, was a great deal more disgusting.

At breakfast next morning I invited Margaret to join the expedition to the Ogam stones. I really wanted her. I felt that I required a chaperon. I was embarrassed at the prospect of a walk alone with the authoress of "Turquoise and Pearl." Margaret refused the invitation.



"I should only be in the way," she said. "If you and Miss Bently are going to talk about Sanskrit I should be bored."

"We probably won't talk about Sanskrit to-day," I said. "She only did so last night to please me. You've often told me that that is what clever women do with men like me."

"What will you talk about, then?"

"I don't know; perhaps about novels. Miss Bently, it appears, is rather a famous novelist."

"Oh! I never heard of her. What has she written?"

"She didn't tell me the names of her books," I said, "and I didn't like to ask her."

"Well, I don't know her books," said Margaret, "so there's no use my coming with you."

I took Miss Bently to see the Ogam stones. We started at eleven and did not get back till nearly two. We talked the whole time about the Gaelic language, ancient and modern. She was evidently bent on making a fool of me. She did it most successfully. I found it very difficult to believe that she was not interested in what I said. She certainly displayed extraordinary intelligence. She said—at the moment I actually believed her—that she had read my paper in "The Philologist." She said—and this may have been true—that her uncle, the famous Professor Windlesheim, of Heidelberg, had spoken very highly of my work. I completely forgot

my embarrassment and never gave a single thought to "Turquoise and Pearl."

I was obliged to confess to Margaret at afternoon tea that the conversation during our walk had never once turned on novels or novel writing.

"She must be a really clever woman," said Margaret thoughtfully. Long intimacy with Margaret had given me the power of guessing pretty accurately at what she really means when she speaks. I knew that upon this occasion she was not thinking of Miss Bently as a *savante*, and that the cleverness which she recognized had nothing to do with Gaelic or Sanskrit.

"I wonder," Margaret went on, "why she does it."

I was perfectly frank in my reply.

"I haven't the least idea," I said. "But she'll certainly not do it again. I shall talk about novels at dinner to-night, even if I have to refer to——"

I paused.

"Refer to what?"

"Turquoise and Pearl" was in my mind, but I said:

"The Times Book Club."

"I don't see any difficulty about that," said Margaret. "Everybody is talking about it."

They were, at that time.

I tried to keep my resolve. Miss Bently—I took her in to dinner again of course—made resolute efforts to return to the Ogam stones. I mentioned

the name of every novel I could recollect, and commented freely on several that I had not read. Miss Bently replied in monosyllables and displayed absolutely no interest in the books.

"Miss Bently," I said at last, "we talked all yesterday evening and most of this morning about my work. Don't you think it's time that we talked about yours?"

She blushed. With the recollection of "Turquoise and Pearl" fresh in my mind I don't wonder that she blushed. Even Mrs. Danton would blush, I suppose, if suspected of having read the book. It was plainly much worse to have written it. I am bound to say she looked exceedingly charming, very innocent and shy, when I spoke directly about her work. She looked, indeed, very much as I recollect Margaret looked once when I found a poem that she had written. She was a schoolgirl at that time. I do not think that she writes poems now.

"Oh, my work is nothing," said Miss Bently.

"On the contrary," I said, "its fame has penetrated even to the west of Ireland. You must not think us utter barbarians."

"I'm in great hopes," she said, blushing again more charmingly than ever, "that my paper for next month's meeting of the British Association——"

"Your what?" I asked.

"My paper. Didn't you know? But of course you didn't. How could you? I am reading a paper

in the philological section on Gaelic and Icelandic roots. My uncle is going over it for me and correcting it. That is the reason I wanted so much to meet you."

"But how can you possibly——?"

"I'm sure it will be no good really," she said, "but if you'll allow me I should like to send you a copy of it afterwards."

"Miss Bently," I said, "did you write——? I mean to say have you ever read——? What I want to say is, are you familiar with many modern novels?"

"I read Miss Yonge's," she said, "when I was at school; but I've been so busy ever since I went up to Girton that I really haven't had time for novels."

After dinner I got Mrs. Danton into a corner by herself.

"That book," I said, "'Turquoise and Pearl' is the most disgusting thing I ever read."

"You seem to be getting on very well with Miss Bently all the same," said Mrs. Danton.

I saw that she was laughing at me, and I very nearly hated her; although she is, in spite of anything Margaret can say, a very charming woman.

"She didn't write it," I said, "and it's an abominable insult——"

"I know she didn't," said Mrs. Danton. "Don't be angry with me. I only found out my mistake to-night. I'd have told you before dinner if I'd got a chance. I was talking to Tom about it. He knew

all along that Rose Bently was an assumed name. I don't mean assumed by our Miss Bently, I mean the other woman, the real one, you know. I don't wonder she didn't use her own name. She's a married woman, and her husband is trying to get a separation from her on account of the book. Tom says he doesn't wonder."

"I don't wonder either," I said. "I shan't return the book. I shall burn it."

"You're quite right," said Mrs. Danton, "as a clergyman, I mean, of course."

Miss Bently and I went again the next day to see the Ogam stones. We talked about ancient Gaelic and some other things. We did not get back until three o'clock. Margaret was out; but I met her later on at afternoon tea.

"Margaret," I said, "I have something very serious to say to you."

"I suppose," she said, "that you're engaged to be married to Miss Bently!"

"Yes. How did you guess?"

"It's a comfort to think," she said, "that being a novelist, she'll be able to earn something. You haven't much to marry on."

"She's not a novelist," I said. "She's a remarkable Gaelic scholar."

"Does she keep that up still?" said Margaret.

"There's no keeping up about it," I said. "She's reading a paper next month before the British Association on Gaelic and Icelandic roots."



"But she is a novelist," said Margaret. "You told me so, yesterday."

"I was mistaken. She never wrote a novel in her life and I hope she never will."

"I am sorry to hear it. There's no money to be got out of Icelandic roots."

Margaret prides herself on her strong common sense. I am inclined to regard her as occasionally sordid.

Just before I went up to dress for dinner a boy came to the door with a note. It was from Mrs. Danton.

"A congratulation, of course," said Margaret. "May I see it?"

She leaned over my shoulder while I opened and read it.

"What does she mean," said Margaret, "by that postscript about the engagement ring being turquoise and pearls? Pearls are supposed to be unlucky."

"It's some silly joke," I said. "You never can tell what Mrs. Danton means when she tries to make jokes."

## XV.—THE GHOSTS

**M**R. COLE," said the parlourmaid, announcing the curate at the drawing-room door.

Nellie L'Estrange rose from the chair in which she had been nestling before the fire, laid down her book, and greeted the Rev. John Cole with a smile of welcome. She did not, under ordinary circumstances, care for entertaining the curate, whom she regarded as a bore; but the day had been persistently wet, and for many hours she had not interchanged a word with any one. Besides, there was always a certain amount of pleasure to be got out of teasing Mr. Cole. He was curiously defenceless when Nellie poked fun at him.

"My mother," she said, "is upstairs. She has a very bad headache to-day; but I shall be so pleased if you will stay and have tea with me."

Mr. Cole expressed great sorrow for Mrs. L'Estrange. Then he sat down and began to talk heavily about the sensational event which a week before had broken the calm of the village. A tramp of most disreputable appearance had been found dead one morning in the churchyard. He had, apparently, sought shelter for the night behind a tombstone. A coroner's jury sat upon his body and brought in a very proper verdict. Then Mr. Cole

buried him almost in the exact spot on which he died. The subject, once exciting enough, bored Nellie. She had heard all she wanted to hear about the dead tramp.

"So nice of him," she said flippantly, "to choose such a convenient place to die. I daresay now, if there had happened to be an open grave he'd have lain down in it, and then you'd have had nothing to do but cover him up. He couldn't, of course, do that for himself."

Mr. Cole sought for a rebuke suitable for Nellie's flippancy. Before he found one the parlourmaid entered with the tea-tray. Mr. Cole disliked the parlourmaid, whose name was Esther, because he suspected her of being nearly as flippant as Nellie herself. He did not speak again until the girl had left the room. Then he handed Nellie the buttered toast, fishing it up out of the fender with some trouble, and began a new discourse.

"The amount of superstition," he said, "which still lingers in these remote villages is surprising and depressing. I understand that no one will go near the churchyard at night since the tramp died there. The bucolic mind remains impervious to the efforts of educationists. It is——"

He spoke very pompously, so Nellie interrupted him at once.

"Is there really a ghost?" she said. "How jolly! Do you know, I've never seen a ghost, have you?"

"The subject," said Mr. Cole, "is not one I care to joke about."

"Surely you don't really believe there is a ghost in the churchyard?"

"I regard the stories the village people tell as pure fabrications," said Mr. Cole; "but I am far from venturing to assert dogmatically——"

"But what do the village people say?"

Mr. Cole, somewhat unwillingly, repeated a story of a tall, white figure, seen night after night flitting among the tombstones. It was a ghost of the most orthodox description, and the road near the churchyard, which was nearly a mile from the village, had got a very bad name. Nellie ridiculed each point of the story, and it appeared to Mr. Cole that she was also ridiculing him. He disliked being laughed at, and asserted his dignity by saying several very ponderous things about psychical phenomena. Nellie seemed to find them irresistibly comic.

Esther, the parlourmaid, entered with a fresh plate of buttered toast. Her face was perfectly demure, but Mr. Cole formed the opinion that she, too, was inclined to laugh at him. He became painfully self-conscious, and talked more pompously than ever.

"Mr. Cole," said Nellie suddenly, "will you take me to see the ghost?"

"I don't think I can very well do that," said Mr. Cole. "The fact is——"

"The fact is that you're a little nervous. Is that what you are going to say?"

He intended to say something quite different. The ghost, according to the witness of the villagers, was not timed to appear until twelve o'clock at night. Mr. Cole, as a clergyman, had a character to lose. He did not like the idea of parading the roads at midnight alone with Miss L'Estrange. He hesitated. It was not easy to put his feelings into words without being insulting. Nellie was, apparently, quite reckless about her character.

"You *are* afraid," she said. "I can see it by your face."

"I'm not the least afraid," he said, "and if you really wish——"

"There's nothing I should like more," said Nellie. "I told you I had never seen a ghost, and we all ought to see one at least before we die. I may never get such a chance again. Besides, it can't do me any harm if you are with me, can it? You'd exorcise it."

She looked at him as she spoke in such a very agreeable way that Mr. Cole was mollified. He made up his mind to outrage propriety. "Very well," he said, "I'll call for you at half-past eleven. I hope the rain will have stopped by that time."

"Do you think," she said, "that the ghost will mind the rain? From what we're told about—you know the place I mean, Mr. Cole—I should have



thought a ghost of that sort would rather like a little cold water."

This was too much for Mr. Cole. He refused, always, to make jokes on sacred subjects. He rose and said good-bye to Nellie.

"Don't forget now," she said. "I shall expect you at half-past eleven sharp. You mustn't either ring or knock. I shall be looking out for you, and there's no use disturbing mother—she has such a dreadful headache, poor dear."

Mr. Cole walked back to his lodgings through the rain, and wished very much that he saw some way of curing Miss L'Estrange of flippantly irreverent talk. He wanted to do this, not for his own satisfaction, but for her good. He felt that he would like to be in a position to laugh at her as she laughed at him—always, of course, for her good. The recollection of the way she had looked at him sideways out of the corners of her eyes made him all the more anxious to assert his dignity. Just as he reached his lodgings, a great, a really brilliant idea, struck him.

Mr. Cole had a young nephew—a schoolboy of fifteen years of age—an engaging youth of great physical energy. Owing to an outbreak of measles in his own proper home this boy was spending a dull and tedious Christmas holiday with his clerical uncle.

"Georgie," said Mr. Cole, "you've heard all this talk about the ghost in the churchyard, I suppose?"

"Rotten piffle," said Georgie, who had a fine command of language.

"Quite so. You don't believe in ghosts, of course?"

"Rather not. Not such a beastly mug."

"Would you have any objection to dressing up as a ghost, and appearing in the churchyard to-night? There's some one I rather want to play a trick on."

"I'm on," said Georgie. "You trot out your juggins at the right mo., and I'll make every particular hair of his head stand on end like bristles on the frightful crocodile."

Driven to desperation by the wet afternoon, Georgie had been dipping into the works of the poet Shakespeare. "The Old Cow"—it was thus that Georgie spoke of his form master—had suggested one of the plays as good holiday reading.

"What's more," he added, "I'll jump on his back and scrag him until he shrieks like a what-do-you-call-it drake dragged out of the earth."

Mr. Cole was not as familiar with Shakespeare as he might have been. He failed to recognize the mandrake.

"You needn't do that," he said. "The fact is that the person I want to frighten is a girl."

"Oh," said Georgie doubtfully. His hesitation was not the result of any chivalrous impulse. He merely dreaded complications. "Will she faint?"

"No. I shall be there to protect her."

This opened up new and attractive possibilities to Mr. Cole. He began to think of himself as the hero of the drama, Nellie taking the part of the damsel in distress. Georgie put his thought into words for him.

"Regular good old Perseus you'll be, Uncle John, slaughtering Andromeda with a curly sword like the picture in the classical dictionary."

An old surplice, a garment with sleeves of supernatural shape, was found for Georgie. He agreed to remain concealed behind a tombstone until the church clock struck twelve. Then he would slip on the surplice, emerge, and wave his arms, standing on any convenient eminence. He spent the evening practicing a ghostly way of walking. He achieved, as a result, a very fair caricature of Miss Maud Allen's dancing. At eleven o'clock his spirits became a little less buoyant. He suggested that his uncle should accompany him to the churchyard, hide behind another tombstone, and rescue the damsel from there. Mr. Cole explained that this was quite impossible, and Georgie, who was a brave boy at heart, went off with the surplice in a paper parcel. His last words to his uncle were those of strong assurance.

"I know jolly well," he said, "that there's no such bally thing as a ghost. Nobody but rotten little kids believes in them."

At half-past eleven Nellie slipped out of the door and joined the Rev. John Cole on the lawn. There

was still a light in Mrs. L'Estrange's bedroom window, so they did not greet one another. The village street was empty, and Mr. Cole congratulated himself that the expedition was not attracting public attention. They reached the end of the road which led to the church in safety. Mr. Cole noticed then that Nellie was less talkative than usual.

"Of course," she said at last, "you don't really believe there are such things as ghosts?"

"I'm not at all sure about that," he said. "Very queer things happen sometimes."

He was anxious to work Nellie up to a condition of mind suitable to the surprise which awaited her. He thought he detected evidence of a slight nervous excitement in the tone of her voice.

"There are some quite unaccountable things," he went on, "which are attested by trustworthy witnesses. It is always possible that we may be mistaken in our sceptical attitude towards these psychic phenomena."

Mr. Cole spoke quite sincerely. The road was extremely dark. The wind made a curious and disagreeable noise among the branches of the trees. There was certainly a churchyard ahead of them in which a tramp of unknown antecedents had quite recently been buried. The belief of the villagers was strikingly strong and definite. Mr. Cole, though he did not for a moment think he would see anything worse than Georgie in a surplice, felt thrilled. He recalled a word which seemed to



describe this ghost hunt of his. It was eerie. Nellie giggled. It seemed to Mr. Cole that her giggle was another symptom of extreme nervousness.

They reached the churchyard, and Mr. Cole, peering at the face of his watch, said that they had still five minutes to wait. He suggested that they should sit down at the gate with their faces towards the graves. Nellie caught him suddenly by the arm.

"What's that?" she said, pointing towards the church through the gloom.

Mr. Cole started. He did not like being clutched unexpectedly; and there was something white glimmering faintly. He stared at it.

"That's nothing," he said. "At least, it's only the white marble cross over old Hoskyn's grave. I know it well. You're not frightened, are you?"

"No," said Nellie. "Of course not. But it did look—just for a moment——"

The church clock struck. Mr. Cole waited in tense excitement. At the fifth stroke Georgie glided from behind old Mr. Hoskyn's monument and began to wave his arms. At the tenth stroke, another white figure, in a much more voluminous white robe, stepped out from the shelter of another tombstone.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Cole.

Then Georgie yelled. This was no part of the programme as originally arranged; and the yell sounded like a genuine expression of fear. The other ghost shrieked wildly. Then both ghosts



made a rush for the gate of the churchyard. Nellie gave a sharp cry of terror and then fled swiftly down the road. Mr. Cole stood his ground for an instant. He had a feeling that it was his duty to succour Georgie. Another glance at the unexpected ghost decided him against taking unnecessary risks. He overtook Nellie at the end of the first hundred yards.

"Help me!" she said. "Oh, help me, it's after us!"

It was. Indeed both of them were. Mr. Cole was not obliged to look round to make sure of the fact. The shrieks of both ghosts rang out frightfully. They had evidently passed the gate, and were in hot pursuit down the road. Mr. Cole grasped Nellie's wrist and dragged her at a break-neck pace down the hill. The ghosts, as well as he could judge by the sound of their footsteps, were gaining rapidly. He glanced behind him. Georgie, hampered by the unaccustomed folds of the surplice, was not running his best. He had secured a lead of not more than ten yards from the second ghost. Mr. Cole trod on a corner of Nellie's skirt, staggered, and then stumbled. Nellie, checked suddenly in her career, stumbled, too, clutched at Mr. Cole with her disengaged hand, and dragged him down in her own fall. The next catastrophe was inevitable. Georgie, uttering a wild whoop, tripped over his uncle's legs and also fell. Mr. Cole was dimly conscious of a mass of whirling white draperies, and then the other ghost flung itself upon Miss L'Estrange.

"Miss Nellie! Miss Nellie!" it said. "Don't let it catch me! It's after me! It's after me! It'll get me! Save me, Miss Nellie!"

Mr. Cole, after a struggle, sat up. It is greatly to his credit that his reasoning faculties were unimpaired by all he had been through. He reflected on the nature of ghosts, and remembered the fact that none of them are able to speak until they are spoken to. This ghost had certainly not been addressed by any one. It occurred to him also that no real ghost was likely to be frightened by a schoolboy in a surplice. But the creature which grovelled on the ground beside him was unquestionably in a state of abject terror. It struck him finally that the voice in which it made its appeal was very like the voice of Mrs. L'Estrange's parlourmaid.

"Esther," said Nellie, "get up off my legs. You're hurting me."

Mr. Cole noticed that Georgie was giggling convulsively. He spoke to him sternly. "Get up, Georgie. Stop laughing at once and take off that ridiculous surplice."

Esther, recovering her self-control, stood up and plucked pins hurriedly out of the sheet in which she was draped. Mr. Cole dragged the surplice off Georgie. Nellie stared at the boy for a minute. Then she turned to Mr. Cole.

"How dare you?" she said. "I might have died of fright."

"I don't see——" said Mr. Cole.

"It was a most ungentlemanly trick to play," said Nellie.

"I don't see that there's much to choose between us. We both seem to have hit on the very same idea."

"Esther," said Nellie, "come home, and don't go into hysterics in the middle of the road. Mr. Cole, I'll never speak to you again!"

This was very unjust, but there are excuses to be made. A good evening dress was permanently ruined, and some account of the mud on it would have to be given to Mrs. L'Estrange.

"Miss L'Estrange," said Mr. Cole, "wait one moment. There's something I want to say to you."

"Well," said Nellie, looking over her shoulder.

"Don't you think it will be best for us all—I mean, wouldn't it be wiser for us to agree to say nothing about this unfortunate business to anybody?"

"I'm glad to see," said Nellie, "that you're a little ashamed of yourself."

"I'm not. I was merely thinking how awkward it would——"

"Then you ought to be. And I'll never speak to you again until you are."

Mr. Cole watched her disappear.

"Girls are rotters," said Georgie, "aren't they, Uncle John?"

Mr. Cole made no answer.

“Last term,” said Georgie, as they walked back to the village together, “the Old Cow made us learn a footy poem by a man called Scott. I thought it beastly muck at the time. It was about girls, and it said that they were ‘uncommon shy and hard to please.’ I see now that the old Johnnie who wrote it, whoever he was, jolly well knew what he was talking about. Anybody would have thought she’d have enjoyed the spoof; but she evidently didn’t.”

## XVI.—THE MYSTERIOUS ENVELOPE

**C**OLONEL JOCELYN, D.S.O., is quite our most eminent relative. He is my wife's first cousin, which entitles her to speak of him as "Gilbert" and "dear old Gilbert," although I do not think she has actually seen him a dozen times in her life. She is particularly fond of talking about him to the Fulkingtons. They are inclined to pride themselves on their social position and to be very exclusive. It is good for them to be made to understand that we are quite as well connected as they are. When the Colonel won his D.S.O., young Fulkington, who is quite as snobbish as his wife, was visibly impressed. When, a little later on, the Colonel was appointed chief of the South Australian police force, my wife went over to the Fulkingtons' house on purpose to tell them the news. By way of emphasizing the relationship, she said that dear old Gilbert intended to pay us a short visit before sailing for Australia. He wanted, she said, to have a long talk about old times. She added that the Fulkingtons must dine with us to meet him when he came. Mrs. Fulkington, who probably expected the Colonel's visit quite as little as my wife did, said that we must spare an evening and bring him over to dine with them. My wife promised to do this,



feeling quite safe because the Colonel had never shown the slightest wish to come near us. I do not blame him for this. We are not well off, and we live a very retired life in a village which would strike him as particularly dull.

Our surprise was great—I have no doubt that the Fulkingtons' was equally great—when the Colonel telegraphed to say that he was going to Scotland for the grouse-shooting, and would pay us a two days' visit on his way. The telegram arrived on Monday, August 7th, and told us that we might expect him on the following Wednesday. The time at our disposal was uncomfortably short, but we at once wrote to the Fulkingtons, claiming them as our guests on Wednesday night. They are, after all, the most presentable people in the neighbourhood. Mrs. Fulkington replied, accepting the invitation, and proposing that we and the Colonel should dine with her on Thursday. Then we settled down to the work of preparation. Most of it fell to my wife's share, for I am singularly useless in a domestic crisis, and I find that my help has an irritating effect on the other workers. Therefore I kept out of the way—that is to say, out of the house—as much as possible, and made no inquiries about the details of the plans for the Colonel's entertainment.

On Wednesday morning I went into the garden, at my wife's request, to make final arrangements about something connected with our dinner—artichokes, I think. When I had settled about the

artichokes I spent an hour with the gardener, discussing, pleasantly enough, the extraordinary wickedness of the judges at our local flower show, who had not given a prize to our carnations. Then I saw my wife hurrying toward us along the centre path of the garden. I knew that something serious and unpleasant had happened, because she was flushed and had a wild look in her eyes.

"What am I to do?" she said, breathlessly. "The wine hasn't arrived! I sent James over to the station, and the case wasn't there."

"James," I said, "always was a fool. So is the station-master. What wine were you expecting?"

"I wrote on Monday for some champagne. I told them to send it down at once. It ought to have been here this morning."

Then my conscience smote me. I had taken that letter to the village on Monday afternoon in my pocket, and had forgotten to post it. It was addressed to Messrs. Jones, Wilkinson & Co., who are chiefly grocers, though they also sell wine. We deal with them for tea, sugar, soap, and all sorts of other things which can be had cheaper and better in London. Letters are continually going to them from my wife, and I had no idea that this one contained anything so important as an order for champagne. My face, I suppose, betrayed the fact that my conscience was uneasy.

"Are you quite sure you posted the letter?" said my wife.

"Quite," I said firmly.

Jones and Wilkinson both lived in London; so, I presume, does the company associated with them. London is one hundred and fifty miles away from us. Jones & Wilkinson would therefore suffer very little from my wife's anger. I should suffer a great deal. It was better for them to bear the blame. Besides, I did post the letter—on Tuesday morning.

"There'll be nothing to drink at dinner," she said. I felt the difficulty and did my best to minimize it.

"There's whiskey," I said, "and sherry. Fulkington drinks whiskey, I know. You and Mrs. Fulkington can manage with the sherry."

"But Gilbert!"

"The Colonel," I said, "is an old campaigner. He'll rub along all right. I dare say he has often been glad enough to get water—in South Africa, you know."

"I'll telegraph to Jones & Wilkinson," said my wife.

"That'll be no use now."

"It will let them know what I think of them," she said, vindictively. This made me uneasy, but not seriously uneasy. Jones & Wilkinson would probably make some attempt to defend their reputation for promptitude in business by asserting that they did not receive the letter till Wednesday morning, but I could, in the last resort, lay the blame on the post-office.

Our dinner went off very well in spite of the want

of champagne. The Colonel frequently addressed my wife as Susannah, which impressed the Fulkingtons; I have always dropped the last syllable of her name. He was evidently greatly pleased with his new appointment, and talked a good deal during dinner about the prevention and the detection of crime. After the ladies left us he explained a scheme he had devised for training the South Australian detective force. Fulkington and I listened, pretending that we took an interest in the investigation of murders and robberies. The Colonel showed himself tremendously enthusiastic about his new duties.

Next morning at breakfast I opened the post-bag as usual and, with some slight misgiving, handed my wife a letter from Messrs. Jones, Wilkinson & Co. The Colonel was helping himself to fish when she opened it and had his back turned to us. My wife read the letter, glanced at an inclosure which it contained, and then made an exclamation.

"This isn't my envelope!" she said.

The Colonel turned at once. Some instinct must have led him to expect a mysterious crime. His face wore that look of keen determination which is proper to an eminent detective. I glanced through the letter of Jones & Wilkinson. It was, as I anticipated, an apology and an excuse. They had not, so they said, received the order until Wednesday morning, and therefore had been unable to despatch the champagne on Tuesday. As a proof of their



statement they referred my wife to the post-mark on the envelope, which they inclosed.

"It's not my envelope at all," said my wife, "and it's not my writing."

I glanced at the envelope and satisfied myself that it was blue, whereas all our envelopes are white. This puzzled me a good deal. I understood very well how it happened that Jones & Wilkinson had not received the letter until Wednesday morning. I did not understand how it came to arrive in a blue envelope. I certainly had posted it in a white one. Besides, a single glance at the writing showed me that it was not my wife's. I had no time for more than a single glance, because the Colonel, with the promptitude which is characteristic of all great criminal investigators, pounced on it and carried it over to the window. There he made a very careful examination of it, both inside and out. He studied the handwriting minutely with the help of a small magnifying-glass which he took out of his pocket. From time to time he gave us the results of his investigations in a series of jerky sentences:

"Posted here August 8th. Received, London, August 9th. Envelope, azure vellum. Albert size. Educated female handwriting. Stephen's Blue-Black Ink. Hurriedly written. Water-mark, crown surmounted by cross. Slightly scented. Soft pen used."

Then he turned to my wife and questioned her. She did not want to tell the story about the hurried



order for champagne; but she told it. The Colonel examined and cross-examined her with the utmost ferocity, as if she were in a witness-box and suspected of committing perjury. When he had got all he could out of her he attacked me.

I stuck firmly to my original statement that I had posted the letter on Monday afternoon. I saw nothing to be gained by confessing that I had forgotten all about it until Tuesday morning. My forgetfulness would not explain the fact that the letter had changed its envelope on the way to London; whereas a confession would certainly involve me in unpleasantness. The Colonel looked at me so sternly that I began to feel quite nervous. I corroborated my statement by way of increasing his confidence in my truthfulness.

"I recollect the circumstances perfectly," I said, "because Fulkington's brown dog was standing near the post-office at the time and barked at me."

"A brown dog!" said the Colonel, with the air of a man who has come upon something of real importance.

"Yes, an Irish terrier."

"You're certain it was Fulkington's?"

I was, of course, quite certain that it was not; although Fulkington really has an Irish terrier.

"Yes," I said, "it was Fulkington's. I know it because it has only one ear. The other got bitten off in a fight with a sheep-dog. Besides, no one else in the neighbourhood has an Irish terrier."

The Colonel sat down to his breakfast and finished it without speaking. Then he paced the gravel outside the hall door and smoked a cigar. I could see that he was thinking deeply. I ventured after a while to ask him if he had got any clue to the mystery. He said that he had several, and intended to follow them all out until he placed the criminal in the dock.

At eleven o'clock he took his hat and walked down toward the village. At half-past twelve he came back, looking keener and more determined than ever. He summoned me into my own study, and when he got me inside he locked the door.

"I think it right," he said, "to place you in possession of the facts so far as I have arrived at them."

"I wish you would," I said. "I'm tremendously interested."

"In the first place, then, the envelope in which that letter arrived in London was not bought here. I went round to every shop in the village and made sure that no such envelopes are kept for sale. The inference from that is obvious."

"Quite," I said. "It was bought somewhere else."

The Colonel frowned. "The inference I am inclined to draw," he said, "is that the person who opened and readdressed the letter does not obtain stationery at the local shops."

"That," I said, "seems a sound deduction."

"It narrows the field of inquiry."

"Your idea," I said, "is that some one got hold of my wife's letter after it was posted, opened it, put it in another envelope, and then posted it again."

"That is plain enough."

"But why should——?"

"The motive is perfectly obvious."

"Is it?"

"To me or to any one who has made a study of criminal investigation—quite obvious. The letter was addressed to a shop, and might be supposed to contain a postal order."

This did not seem to me perfectly satisfactory. The Colonel's criminal, having successfully captured and opened the letter, ran a wholly unnecessary risk in forwarding it to Jones & Wilkinson. Any sensible thief would have burned it. I found it difficult to believe that a man capable of trying to steal a postal order would have such a respect for our convenience as to repost the letter afterwards, particularly as he would be in a bad temper after opening it, for there was no postal order inside. I wanted to represent all this to the Colonel, but he would not let me.

"Don't you think——?" I began.

"No, I don't," said the Colonel. "There is no greater mistake than thinking. I collect facts. Once the facts are before us they will do their own thinking."

"Of course they will; but still——"

The Colonel waved his hand at me and said that he knew a great deal more about the criminal classes than I did. This was true. I had never been really intimate with a criminal. I at once gave up my attempt to argue.

"I called at the post-office," the Colonel went on, "and discovered that the ink used there is not Stephen's Blue-Black Ink, the kind with which the envelope was addressed. I also, without exciting suspicion about my motive, succeeded in seeing the handwriting of the postmaster and his assistant. Neither of them bears any resemblance whatever to that on the envelope. These facts point necessarily to certain conclusions."

"I suppose they do. They seem to me to make the whole thing rather more confused; but then I'm not a detective."

"I am."

"Would you mind telling me——?"

"The letter," said the Colonel, "was evidently taken out of the post-office on Monday evening, opened, and readdressed at some time during Monday night, and posted again on Tuesday morning, by some person who used blue-black ink, bought stationery at a distance, and wrote the hand of an educated lady. You follow me so far?"

I followed him perfectly, although I knew that the letter had been in the pocket of my coat all Monday night, and that the first part of the Colonel's statement was entirely wrong. I did not, however,



attempt to correct him. We should not have been any nearer knowing who opened the letter if I, at that eleventh hour, had confessed my share in the crime.

"Don't keep me in suspense," I said. "Tell me who it is that you suspect."

"I don't suspect any one," he said. "I never allow myself to entertain suspicions. Before evening I shall know."

There was a tap at the study door. I opened it, and the parlourmaid handed me a letter, explaining that it had just been brought by Mr. Fulkington's stable-boy. Before I could open it the Colonel took it out of my hand. He looked at it carefully, and then smiled grimly.

"This," he said, "helps me materially."

"I don't see how it can. That letter comes from Fulkington."

The Colonel took the other envelope, the one which Messrs. Jones & Wilkinson had sent us, from his pocket and laid it on the table. He put Fulkington's beside it. He pointed to them silently. I was forced to admit that they were very much alike. Then the Colonel opened Fulkington's and examined the water-mark.

"A crown surmounted by a cross," he said, "and addressed in blue-black ink with a soft pen."

"The two handwritings," I said, "are entirely different."

The Colonel took no notice of this remark.



"These two envelopes," he said, tapping them turn about with his forefinger, "came from the same house. We have not very far to go now to find the criminal. What you told me this morning about Fulkington's brown dog fits in exactly with the evidence afforded by the envelopes themselves."

I was sorry then that I had mentioned the brown dog. It seemed to me at the time to be a harmless piece of corroborative evidence. If I had thought it would still further confuse a troublesome inquiry I should not have said anything about it.

"We may presume," said the Colonel, "that the dog did not walk to the post-office by itself. It was led there by some one—by some one whom you did not see."

"It's perfectly absurd," I said, "to suppose, as you apparently do, that Fulkington would hide behind the post-office door when he saw me coming in order to purloin a letter for the sake of a paltry postal order. I've known him for twenty years and more, and, though he has his faults, he wouldn't do a thing like that. Besides, there wasn't a postal order in the letter. We deal regularly with Jones & Wilkinson and have an account there. Your suspicions——"

The Colonel smiled in a very lofty and superior way. "I suspect no one," he said, speaking in a tone which made me feel that Fulkington would be lucky if he got off with five years' penal servitude.

Still smiling at me, the Colonel took his hat and

went out. He walked in the direction of the village, intending, I suppose, to collect more facts. I wondered whether he would find out that Fulkington's brown dog was at home in its kennel on Monday afternoon.

After watching him off the premises, I went to look for my wife. I found her very busy over the bodice of a dress which she had not worn for a long time. She explained to me that it was absolutely necessary to make some alterations in the garment in order to meet the requirements of the present fashion. She intended to wear it that night at the Fulkington's dinner-party.

"I can't go," she said, "in the same gown that I wore last night."

"It's very doubtful," I said, "whether you'll go to the Fulkingtons' at all."

"What on earth do you mean? We've promised to go."

"The Colonel," I said, "has gone out to arrest poor Fulkington on the charge of stealing that letter of yours."

"Do try to talk sense. The letter wasn't stolen."

"It was opened and put into another envelope—an envelope of a most uncommon kind not procurable in this neighbourhood and only used by Fulkington."

"I wish," said my wife, "that you'd all stop fussing about that letter. The champagne arrived this morning. They only sent three bottles instead

of six, and it was a different kind, not what I ordered; but that doesn't matter now. Gilbert is going away to-morrow morning, so we shan't want it."

"He may or may not go," I said. "If he arrests Fulkington this afternoon, he will. But if Fulkington is out when he calls, he'll have to wait till to-morrow. He'll hardly put handcuffs on him at his own dinner-table."

My wife failed altogether to realize the critical position of poor Fulkington. She refused to discuss the matter further, and insisted on my leaving the room. She said that she had little enough time for bringing the dress up to date, and that if I interrupted her work any more she would not be able to get it done.

The Colonel returned from his second expedition about five o'clock. He seemed to be very well satisfied with himself, and I was most anxious to hear what he had done. He had been out at luncheon-time and was evidently very hungry, so I waited until he had drunk three cups of tea and eaten nearly half of a cake. Then I asked him whether he had collected much fresh evidence.

"I have," he said, "entirely satisfied myself, and I have no doubt that I shall be able to satisfy any reasonable jury."

"Then you haven't actually arrested——?"

"No. Not yet. We are, as I understand, to dine with the Fulkingtons to-night. I shall do nothing

until after that, and I must request you not to ask me questions until then. The case is more complicated than I supposed, and I wish to say nothing until I have had a talk with Fulkington."

My wife had evidently been impressed by what I said to her during the afternoon, although she had pretended at the time to think that I was talking nonsense. She told the Colonel respectfully but quite plainly that she did not believe that Fulkington himself could possibly be guilty. The Colonel merely smiled. He did not even remind her that he knew more about the criminal classes than she did.

The Fulkingtons gave us a good dinner—a better dinner than I ever ate in their house on any other occasion. They had champagne. This, I could see, vexed my wife; but the excellence of the dinner saved her from actually losing her temper. The unusual splendour was a tribute to the eminence of the Colonel, and nothing pleases her more than an appreciation of the greatness of her family.

After dinner the Colonel opened the subject of the mysterious envelope. He did so in an oblique way which at first greatly puzzled me.

"You have in your service," he said to Fulkington, "a young woman called Long—Annie Long."

Fulkington seemed a little surprised at this statement. He admitted that his housemaid was called Annie, but said he would have to inquire from Mrs. Fulkington whether her surname was Long.



"It is Long," said the Colonel, decisively, "and she is engaged to be married to a young man called George Crab."

"I have never heard of him before," said Fulkington, "but it's no affair of mine if she is. I suppose she'll give us the usual month's notice."

"George Crab," said the Colonel, "is the assistant in the local post-office. Will you be so good as to allow me to see a specimen of Annie Long's handwriting?"

This request not unnaturally irritated Fulkington; he said he had never seen Annie Long's handwriting in his life, and did not want to. I tried to soothe him.

"The Colonel," I said, "doesn't mean to suggest that you are carrying on a clandestine correspondence with your own housemaid behind the backs of George Crab and Mrs. Fulkington. He knows you're not that kind of man. You'll find out, if you're patient, that he has some quite different reason for wanting to see the girl's writing."

"Anyhow, I haven't got any of her writing," said Fulkington.

"Annie Long," said the Colonel, "would naturally have access to your stationery?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Fulkington. I intervened again in the interests of peace.

"What the Colonel means," I said, "is that she could take one of your envelopes if she wanted to



send a letter—say, to George Crab. She is sure to write frequently to George Crab.”

“Of course she could take an envelope. So could any one else in the house.”

“The case against the girl Long and her associate,” said the Colonel, “is perfectly plain. On the evening of Monday last, August 7th, a letter addressed to a business firm, and therefore likely to contain a postal order, was taken out of the letter-box in the local post-office. It was opened, clumsily we may presume, perhaps hurriedly, through fear of detection. It was afterwards enclosed in a fresh envelope, readdressed, and posted again on Tuesday, August 8th. Only two persons had access to the letters in the post-office—the postmaster and George Crab. Neither of them addressed the envelope in which the letter was ultimately placed, for the writing in that envelope is a woman’s, and the ink is not that used in the post-office. The envelope is of a kind not obtainable in the locality, but used in your house and accessible to your servants. It seems to me obvious that the letter was taken and opened by George Crab, who, intending to marry Annie Long, was naturally anxious to secure some little money for the expenses of his wedding. Finding himself unable to close the original envelope, he brought the letter out of the office and induced Annie Long to address one of your envelopes to the London firm. In it he enclosed the letter and posted it on Tuesday morn-

ing. I made careful inquiries in the village this afternoon, and there is unfortunately no doubt that the prisoner—I mean to say George Crab—is on terms of closest intimacy with Annie Long.”

“Bless my soul!” said Fulkington, “what an extraordinary story!”

“An instance,” said the Colonel, “quite a simple instance, of the way we detectives go to work.”

“But—but——”

“Perhaps,” said the Colonel, “you’d like to inspect the envelope and judge for yourself.”

He produced the incriminating paper from his coat pocket and handed it to Fulkington, who stared at it for a minute in silence. Then a look of bewilderment passed over his face.

“That’s my wife’s envelope,” he said at last.

“Quite so. Yours or your wife’s. It’s the same thing.”

“But she addressed it,” said Fulkington. “It’s her writing.”

“A clever imitation perhaps.”

“Imitation be hanged! I posted it myself on Tuesday afternoon. The fact is,” Fulkington went on, addressing me, “that when we knew the Colonel was to dine here to-night we wrote to Jones & Wilkinson to send down some champagne. By the way, they sent the wrong brand, and six bottles instead of three.”

The Colonel is a determined man. He was not

prepared to allow the structure he had reared with such pains to crumble before his eyes.

"You'll find," he said, "that I'm right. How else are we to explain the changed envelope of the other letter?"

Next morning the explanation he wished for, or more probably did not wish for, offered itself. Jones, Wilkinson & Co. wrote a long and very apologetic letter to my wife. They explained that the two letters, arriving as they did from the same neighbourhood and by the same post, and being both orders for champagne, had got mixed by their clerk. He had sent Mrs. Fulkington's envelope to my wife. The firm sincerely hoped that no inconvenience had been caused.

No inconvenience had been caused to any one except the Colonel. George Crab and Annie Long had a narrow escape from penal servitude. My own share in the mystery never came to light. The mistake of Jones, Wilkinson & Co.'s clerk drew away attention from the fact, in itself suspicious, that my wife's letter did not arrive in London until Wednesday morning. This was very fortunate for me. The Colonel's temper was so bad when he found out that he had been wasting his time and talents that I am sure he would have indicted me for criminal conspiracy if he had found out that I forgot to post that letter.

## XVII.—THE VIOLINIST

**I**T WAS my sister who arranged that I should escort Mrs. Curtis and her daughter to Venice. I did not want to go there, and I had the strongest possible objection to going there with two American ladies whom I did not know; but when Edith settled the matter I gave in. Edith had always managed me. If she had proposed the whole plan at once, I might have resisted her; but she took me, so to speak, by easy stages, letting me in for the expedition first, and then, when I was committed to that, springing the Americans on me.

Young Reinhardt, of Reinhardt and Golding, publishers, met me in the club one day and asked me to write the letter-press of one of his new series of illustrated guide-books. He offered me a hundred pounds and explained exactly what he wanted.

"Not a revised Baedeker," he said, "but a volume of chatty essays." Venice, it appeared, was the place I was to chat about. "You know the sort of thing I mean," he went on. "'Evening Hours in St. Mark's,' 'Morning Strolls Among the Gondolas.'"

"You can't stroll among the gondolas," I said. "But I think I understand."

My idea was to write the book comfortably in

London. There was not the slightest necessity for me to go to Venice. I had been there twice, and could buy a guide-book of the orthodox kind so as to get my facts right. It was Edith who put a stop to that plan. She said it would not be honest to write the book without making a special expedition to the place. It surprised me to hear her say this, for Edith is not usually strong on the ethics of authorship. She regards the writing of books as a trade, not an art.

"No great book," she said, "can be written without serious effort. What you must do is to steep yourself in the atmosphere of the place, wander day after day through the palaces of the old nobility, brood over the traces of the glorious past, and that sort of thing."

"Very well," I said. "If you think I ought to, I will, but you can't make a guide-book literature, no matter what you soak yourself in. And there won't be much of Reinhardt's hundred left when I've done."

"The Curtises," said Edith casually about an hour later, "are going to Venice next week."

"I start to-morrow," I said. "Otherwise I should, of course, have liked to travel with them."

"Don't be ridiculous," said Edith. "Next week will suit you quite as well, and Mrs. Curtis told me that she always liked to have a man to travel with. Besides, Bessie is an extremely nice girl."

"I haven't met her," I said, "but I remember



your telling me that she'd make an excellent wife for a literary man."

"So she would. She has a very nice little fortune. The father wasn't vulgarly rich, but he was comfortable. Mrs. Curtis is doing Europe to complete Bessie's education. Pictures and statues, you know, and architecture and old furniture—just what a literary man wants in a wife."

"I'm not really literary," I said. "After all, guide-books don't appeal to the cultured minority."

I do not know what other literary men want in their wives, but I am quite clear that I do not want a veneer of Italian art glued over a solid structure of American dollars. The Curtises are Edith's latest friends. She had only known them about a week when she discovered that Bessie was just the wife for me. This, and all Edith told me about her, prejudiced me against the girl. I successfully avoided meeting the Curtises by refusing all Edith's invitations for two months; but, of course, I had to meet them in the end. I did, on the way to Venice.

I did not see anything of them between London and Dover. I put them into one compartment and travelled in another myself on the plea of wanting to smoke. I had no chance of talking to them on the steamer. I was frankly seasick. Mrs. Curtis was what she called "uncomfortable." Bessie lunched on board and afterward appreciated the beauty of the sea rather unsympathetically.

It was in the train between Calais and Paris that I began to know Mrs. Curtis. My acquaintance with Bessie ripened later. Mrs. Curtis, I discovered, is one of those people who can not travel in a railway carriage unless the window is open. She is also the kind of person who always secures a corner seat with her back to the engine. Open windows do no harm to any one in that position. I had to sit with my face to the engine, and I had a stiff neck before we had travelled for an hour. Also my hands, face, and collar were black with smuts. Bessie sat beside her mother and slept profoundly.

We dined in Paris and afterward got our berths in the sleeping car. I was earning a hundred pounds by my excursion, so I felt entitled to such comfort as a *wagon-lits* affords. Bessie's berth was paid for, I suppose, out of her "nice little fortune." But the charges of the International Sleeping Car Company are high, and Bessie's fortune will not last long if she squanders it in this fashion, unless, indeed, it is much larger than Edith seems to think. With Mrs. Curtis's financial position I was not concerned. There was no question of my marrying her. But I hoped that the berths in her compartment would be behind the window. If they were, and if, as I expected, she occupied the lower one, she would have as many smuts as she wanted all over her body before morning, and perhaps a bad cold.

At five o'clock in the morning the sleeping-car attendant wakened me to give me some coffee—the

kind of coffee which is sold at unhallowed hours on the platforms of French railway stations. It comes to the consumer in large white bowls, and has quantities of sugar in it. I took my bowl gratefully, and heard the attendant knocking at the door of the next compartment, that in which the Curtises were. They, too, took the coffee, thankful at first, but a minute later there was a row. Mrs. Curtis opened her door.

"Man, man," she called.

Then, remembering that she was in France, she called "*Garçon! garçon!*" This apparently attracted the attention of the attendants, for she went on:

"*Jamais, jamais*, I never take sugar in my *café*. *Jamais*, do you hear?"

It is the boast of the International Sleeping Car Company that its attendants speak all ordinary languages. But Mrs. Curtis tried our man too high. By way of making things easier for him she pronounced her English with an elaborate French accent, saying "*nevoir*" and "*soogar*." This puzzled the man, and Bessie came to her mother's rescue. I could hear her plainly because she spoke distinctly and very clearly.

"*Madame ma mère*," she said, "*ne prend pas sucre dans son*—no, *sa*, no, *son*—anyhow, *dans café*."

I had gathered that Bessie's education was complete except for the finishing touches to be supplied by Italian art; but it seemed to me that she might

with advantage spend a year or two more at French. I felt it my duty to interfere. I am not a good linguist, but I felt tolerably confident that the man would understand English if I spoke it in a natural way. I opened my door and put out my head. The attendant was standing in the corridor in his neat brown uniform. Bessie, in a pale-blue dressing-gown, with her hair in a long pig-tail, was also in the corridor, pushing a bowl of coffee into the man's hands.

"*Café sans aucun sucre,*" she said. "*Sans aucun du tout.*"

My impulse was to withdraw, but Bessie saw me and appealed to me for help in her struggle with the dense stupidity of a man who could not understand either English or French. I did not venture to go out, because I had no dressing-gown, only a suit of pyjamas; but I told the man that Mrs. Curtis wanted coffee without sugar. He explained quite intelligibly in English that coffee without sugar was unobtainable at that station.

"What nonsense!" she said. "Of course it can be got!"

She walked down the corridor and disappeared through the door at the end of it. I could not see what happened after that, and I do not know whether Bessie actually descended to the platform or contended herself with addressing the coffee vendor from the steps of the sleeping-car; but the train was ten minutes late leaving that station, and



just as it began to move Bessie came along the corridor again with a fresh bowl of coffee. She told me as she passed that there was very little, if any, sugar in it.

I began to think that Edith was right in saying that Bessie would make a good wife for a literary man. Young Reinhardt would not have got his "Chatty Strolls Among Gondolas" for a hundred pounds from *her* husband. He would have had to pay two hundred at least. A girl who would face the crowd on a French railway platform in a blue dressing-gown and drag sugarless coffee from unwilling men to whom she could not speak, all for the sake of an unattractive mother, would defeat any publisher living if she were fighting the battles of a husband whom she really loved.

We had not further adventures until after we left Milan. A restaurant car was hooked on to our train at that city, and I conducted my two ladies into it at about twelve o'clock. Mrs. Curtis at once asked me to open the window. Now the engineer of the International Company which owns the restaurant cars has succeeded in inventing a window which is more difficult than any other in the world to open. I struggled with it in vain, succeeding only in getting my hands disgustingly dirty. When I gave up, bruised and dispirited, Bessie opened it.

A few minutes afterward the waiter came upon us and shut it with a bang. A German who sat at the next table had sent the waiter to do this. I saw



him giving his order to the man. So did Mrs. Curtis. She made some very scathing remarks about Germans, in a loud tone, and I could see Bessie's eyes flashing. I privately sympathised with the German, because my table napkin had been blown away during the short time the window was open.

I explained to Mrs. Curtis that the Italian law forbade the opening of railway carriage windows, and that the penalty attached to the offence is very severe. This may be true. I do not know whether it is or not. It was certainly necessary to say something of the kind. Bessie fully intended to open the window again, and if I had not stopped her there would have been a row with the German.

When lunch was over the German lit a cigar. Bessie's eyes flashed again. She had no objection whatever to the smell of tobacco, indeed she smokes herself; but she had caught sight of a notice printed over the door of the car, *É Vietato Fumare.* "*Fumare*" obviously meant "to smoke"; "*é*" was a very small word not likely to matter one way or the other. Bessie took out a pocket dictionary and looked out "*vietato*." She found, as I expected she would, that it meant "forbidden."

Now any one who is accustomed to the restaurant cars in Italy knows that this notice is put up only as an ornament. Every one smokes as much and as often as desirable. But Bessie saw her opportunity. She beckoned to the waiter, directed his attention first to the notice and then to the German's cigar.

She demanded in unmistakable pantomime that the German should at once be compelled to quench his cigar in his coffee. The waiter delivered the message.

The German, his cigar in his mouth, turned round and stared in astonishment at Bessie. He had, I must say, an offensive kind of face; and he deliberately puffed at his cigar in a way that I can only call insulting. Bessie did not hesitate for a second. She opened the window to its fullest extent. The train was going at a high speed and the inrush of air felt like a gale. I clung to our table-cloth and tried to rescue my wine-glass, which was blown away. When I looked round the German was in full flight from the car, pursued by the waiter with the bill for his luncheon.

Edith was certainly right about Bessie. German tourists are not the only enemies of the human race. I know editors who return manuscripts much better and in every way more suitable for publication than those which they print. A literary man with a wife like Bessie would, I think, have his revenge every time. The ingenuity of Bessie's plan and the prompt vigour with which she had carried it out filled me with admiration.

The Curtises stayed in my hotel in Venice; so, oddly enough, did the German whom Bessie had defeated in the train. We saw him at dinner on the evening of our arrival, and Bessie nodded to him in the friendliest way. She bore him no malice at all

on account of the way she had treated him; which convinced me that she was a young woman of magnanimous spirit. It is very hard to feel kindly toward any one whom you have misused.

Next morning Mrs. Curtis invited me to join her and Bessie in making a tour of the city. She proposed, she said, to do St. Mark's and the Doge's Palace before lunch. I declined, for several reasons. Edith had said I was to soak myself in the Venetian spirit. I should not succeed in more than damping my skin if I did St. Mark's and the Doge's Palace in three hours; and I did not want to go to prison for acquiescing in the methods which Bessie would adopt to get windows open for her mother. She might be reduced to breaking them, and it really is a criminal offence to break stained glass in a cathedral. These were my real reasons for refusing Mrs. Curtis's invitation.

What I told her was that I must begin writing my book at once because young Reinhardt was clamouring for it. In order to convince her that this was true I went up to my bedroom and brought down a quantity of paper and two pens. Then I settled myself at a writing-table in a corner of what our landlord calls the winter garden of our hotel. Mrs. Curtis and Bessie went off in a gondola. I saw them sail away and heard Bessie urging on the gondolier in good Italian.

"*Allegro,*" she said. "*Con molto spirito! Vivace! Fortissimo!*"

Her music, I thought, must be better than her French.

I went peaceably to sleep. Women are different ; but a man requires some sleep after travelling straight through from London to Venice. Besides, I had promised Edith that I would soak myself in the atmosphere of the place. I was wakened at eleven o'clock by the sound of the piano. There was a grand piano in the corner of the winter garden, and our German enemy was playing at it, hard.

It is possible, as I have often proved at concerts, to sleep through almost any kind of music. I did a little musical criticism at one time and had some experience even of orchestras. If only the music retains its character it is no real bar to sleep. Soft music is, of course, actually soothing. Dances and marches weave themselves into agreeable dreams. Even the works of the most passionate modern composers do not disturb me so long as they are fairly consistent.

But this German played music of the most variable kind. I should not have complained if it had varied merely by being sometimes loud and sometimes soft. That one expects. But he wandered from Brahms to Wagner ; gave me scraps of Chopin and little bits of Mozart. Occasionally he emitted a few phrases of what promised to be a tune, and then, just as I was getting hold of it, he



shattered it with a series of violent chords. Sleep became totally impossible.

I composed, with great care, a very polite German sentence in which I asked him to put off his performance until the afternoon, because I was writing a book. I went over to the piano and recited it to him. I began, I remember, "Verehrlich Herr Professor," which ought to have softened any one's heart. It means, or was supposed to mean, "Most honourable Mr. Professor," and all Germans look up to professors.

He looked at me malevolently. "I should," he said, "much more easily and with less mental effort understand, if you in your own tongue speak. I have the English language fluently and idiomatically acquired."

I felt less inclined to be polite after that, but I kept my temper. "If you know English," I said—"and of course I take your word for it—I shall try to make it plain to you that I am writing a book, a very important book, on Venetian Art, and I find it difficult to concentrate my thoughts on Paul Veronese while you are performing selections from the works of eminent musicians. I should be very much obliged to you, very much indeed, if you'd——"

"In playing the piano," he said, "in a public room of the hotel, I am my legitimate right well within."

"I know that," I said. "I'm not disputing your legal right to play. I know I can't force you to

stop. I was appealing to your sense of courtesy. As a professor you must be able to appreciate the feelings of a literary man, and ordinary courtesy will suggest to you——”

“Courtesy,” he said. “What is that?”

I saw that there was no use arguing with him any more. I went back to my corner. I felt that since I could not possibly sleep I might as well write a few pages of the guide-book for Reinhardt. I thought of beginning with a chapter on tourists of other nationalities. Before I had written a word Bessie Curtis came in. She smiled at the German, who was working through the first movement of the Waldstein Sonata, and then came over to me.

“Mother,” she shouted, “has been obliged to go to her room and lie down.” She had to shout on account of the Waldstein.

“Headache, I suppose?” I yelled.

Bessie nodded. The German turned his attention suddenly to a nocturne of Chopin’s. I was able to speak in an ordinary voice.

“Brought on, I suppose, by the airless condition of the Doge’s Palace?”

“Not a window in the whole place that I could get open. Wouldn’t it be rather nice now, as she has broken down, if you were to take me in a gondola to see them making glass, or else somewhere to eat ices? I suppose you’ve finished your book by this time?”

“I haven’t written a word,” I said. “How could

I with that German of yours playing the piano?"

"Shall I stop him?"

"Do," I said, "if you can."

I had begun to hate that German bitterly, and I had the greatest confidence in Bessie. I was also curious to see what would happen when he told her that he was well within his rights in playing the hotel piano in a public room. I felt sure he would tell her that, and he did.

She spoke to him quite politely, though she did not call him a Highly Honoured Professor. He answered her exactly as he had answered me. Bessie made no appeal to his courtesy. She turned and left the room. The German smiled and began one of Bach's fugues.

I confess that I felt disappointed. I had expected Bessie to put up some kind of a fight. She had done so much for her mother that I thought she would have faced one small difficulty for me. I sighed. The German played on triumphantly.

Then Bessie returned carrying a violin in her hand. She told me afterwards she had borrowed it from the head waiter, using the hall porter as an interpreter, for the head waiter's English, though ample for all purposes of his proper business, did not run to the names of musical instruments. Bessie sat down behind the German and screwed up her strings. He was so absorbed in the intricacies of the second fugue that he did not notice her. She drew the bow downward across the strings with a

sharp jerk, and then, equally sharply, pushed it up again. She succeeded in getting sound out of all four strings.

The German lifted his hands from the piano, turned round, and looked at her with a face of horror. Bessie smiled pleasantly and began to work the bow up and down each string in turn with a series of short but vigorous strokes. I'm not very musical, but I felt inclined to shriek. The noise Bessie made was absolutely diabolical. The German, I think, was musical. He stuffed his fingers into both his ears.

"*Fräulein*," he said, "*gnädiges Fräulein*, in the name of the Almighty, stop!"

Bessie fiddled on relentlessly. The German relapsed into his own tongue, and my impression is that he swore abominably. Bessie was gaining a mastery over her instrument every minute, and making noises that I should not before have believed to be possible. The German—he must have been very musical indeed—fell on his knees beside her and reached up supplicating hands.

"*Fräulein*," he said, "you are unspeakably terrible discord making. To me it is no longer without frenzy and madness to be borne."

Bessie stopped. "I am," she said, "well within my rights in playing the fiddle in a public room in the hotel."

The German got up from his knees and stumbled



out of the room. I never saw him again, so I think he must have left the hotel.

"Now," said Bessie, "go on with your book. Do you think you can finish it before lunch?"

"I'm inclined to leave this book for the present," I said. "Let's go in a gondola, and get ices. I know a shop in the Piazza where they have them really good."

I am now convinced that Edith was quite right. The literary man who is lucky enough to get Bessie for a wife has fame and fortune within easy grasp. Difficulties simply disappear before her.

## XVIII.—PASSIONATE KISSES

LISNALLY is a small and inconvenient town, but the neighbourhood is counted an agreeable one. Nowhere else in Ireland are there so many retired military officers. We are not very well off, but we are most friendly and sociable. In summer we have a tennis club. In winter we meet at each other's houses to play bridge. We possess, both in summer and in winter, fairly good golf links. The place has been unkindly described as a hotbed of gossip. I prefer to say that we are all friendly with our neighbours, and, as friends should, take a deep interest in each other's affairs. When old Colonel Miles' boy passed into Sandhurst I was as pleased as he was, and told the news to everyone I met. When Jack Rodgers, the rector's only son, took first honours in some college examination, old Miles, who was the first to hear of it, called on me and half a dozen other people to tell us, and we were all in a position to congratulate the rector when we met him. I do not call that kind of thing gossip.

Lisnally Castle, the only large house in the neighbourhood, stood empty for years because Lord Lisnally, who owned it, lived abroad. Last November it was taken by Mrs. Lowe—the Honourable Mrs. Edward Lowe. We all knew something about

her beforehand, for her name appears frequently in the fashionable intelligence of the London papers. She is a widow and very well off. Her tastes, so we gathered from the newspapers, were theatrical, and we all hoped that she would get up something in the way of a play for our benefit during the winter.

I called on her directly after she arrived, and she told me that she intended to do something to brighten us all up. She was as good as her word. Never before or since did Lisnally enjoy so splendid a sensation as that which Mrs. Lowe's New Year party provided.

Early in December she proposed that we should get up amateur theatricals. I told her that I was too old to take a part, but I offered to act as stage manager. Mrs. Lowe said she intended to be stage manager herself, but that she would be glad of my help in selecting the caste.

"Your local knowledge, Major," she said, "and your tact will be invaluable."

They were. I was sorry sometimes, before we were through with the business, that I had so much local knowledge and tact. There were a great many difficulties, and Mrs. Lowe always fell back on me to surmount them.

Our principal lady was Miss Minnie Rodgers, the rector's eldest daughter. She was a very pretty girl, and had acted several times at school in speech day plays. We had no hesitation about selecting her, and she accepted the part with alacrity. Our

troubles began when we came to choose the leading gentleman. There were three candidates for the part of Minnie's lover. The police officer, Mr. Gunning, put in a strong claim. He said it was the only part he could play really well. The villain, he assured us, was out of the question for him on account of his profession. As a police officer he could not possibly compromise himself by representing a man whom he might in real life be called upon to arrest. He firmly refused to be Minnie's father, because he did not want to shave off his moustache. George Miles, old Colonel Miles' eldest son, who was at home for a holiday, said that he wanted the part.

"Gunning," he said, "is far too old for a lover. The hero of the piece ought to be a man in the prime of life."

Gunning looks about thirty; George Miles is just nineteen.

The rector read the play as a sort of censor, and told me that he made a point of the lover's part being given to his own son. Minnie, as he pointed out, had to be kissed several times in the last act by her lover, and it would be very embarrassing to the girl if this were done by anyone except her own brother. Mrs. Lowe asked me to settle the matter without hurting anybody's feelings. She said that she did not really care who had the part, but that George Miles was by far the best suited for it, and



that the play would probably be a complete failure if anyone else were chosen.

"Whoever it is," she said, "will have to wear knee breeches and silk stockings, and you know what Mr. Gunning's legs are like—walking-sticks, my dear Major, emaciated walking-sticks. As for that Rodgers boy, he's shaggy."

I saw Mrs. Lowe's point. Jack Rodgers is a little unkempt. He also had an awkward way of walking. But the rector's opinion weighed with me. I did not like the idea of subjecting a pretty girl to the passionate kisses—"passionate" is in the stage directions—of a strange young man for a long series of rehearsals. I decided in my own mind that Jack Rodgers must have the part. Unfortunately, Minnie herself preferred Gunning. I do not know how she managed it, but she talked Mrs. Lowe into agreeing with her. Gunning confessed to me afterwards that he had promised to pad the calves of his legs with cotton wool.

The rector called on me when he heard that the matter was settled, and said that the passionate kisses must be left out. I took him up to Lisnally Castle, and laid his proposal before Mrs. Lowe. She simply scouted it.

"My dear rector," she said, "don't be absurd. He won't really kiss her. He'll only smack his lips somewhere near the back of her head, standing between her and the audience. Look here——"

She threw her two arms round the rector's neck and smacked her lips.

"You can't call that kissing," she said, "can you?"

The rector, who is also a canon, got extremely red in the face. He straightened his collar and the lappets of his coat.

"Of course," he said, "if there's nothing worse than that——"

Mrs. Lowe picked him up before he had finished his sentence.

"Worse than that!" she said. "Worse! You're not very complimentary to me."

The rector made no real attempt at an apology. We left the house together, and he told me that he would not allow Minnie to act in the play. I was not much frightened by the threat. Minnie is a young woman of great determination.

Various other difficulties arose as the rehearsals went on. Every individual member of the company, except Minnie and Mr. Gunning, got angry about something at least once, most of them three or four times. My hair was noticeably greyer, and there was a great deal less of it, when we reached the dress rehearsal on New Year's Eve. Then, I am bound to say, our troubles seemed to be over. The play went swimmingly for the first two acts. Mrs. Lowe was purring with delight, and I found myself patting the actors on the back and expressing my satisfaction in a series of most extravagant compli-

ments. I can honestly say that when the curtain rose for the third act, I did not feel the smallest trace of nervousness.

Mrs. Lowe was still purring when the crisis of the whole play arrived. Mr. Gunning, his legs most beautifully puffy, was on his knees before Minnie, and his pink satin breeches had stood the strain of the attitude. He poured out his declaration of devotion in the best possible style. Minnie turned her head aside coyly, just as Mrs. Lowe had taught her, and felt about with her left hand until she grasped Gunning's shoulder. Then he rose, flung his arms round her, and the passionate kisses began, as directed. Instead of letting her head fall languidly back and gazing up into Gunning's eyes, as Mrs. Lowe had arranged, and as had been done at every rehearsal, Minnie suddenly sprang back and smacked Gunning's face with tremendous force.

"How dare you?" she said.

Then before anyone could interfere she smacked his face again. Mrs. Lowe and I rushed forward. The rector, who had been given a seat in front by special permission, tried to climb across the foot-lights. We seized Minnie and dragged her off the stage. Even Gunning's cheek—she had chosen the same one for both smacks—was not redder than hers were.

"How dared he?" she said.

"What did he do?" said Mrs. Lowe.

"It," said Minnie. "Really, not only pretending."

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, "that Mr. Gunning actually——"

"My cheek," said Minnie, "and then—then my mouth. Oh!"

We got her into the dressing-room, and then Mrs. Lowe signed to me to go away. I was extremely glad to do so. Minnie was laughing in a convulsive way. I had faced most of the difficulties which naturally arise out of private theatricals, but I felt unequal to the hysterics of the leading lady. When I reached the stage I found young Miles and Jack Rodgers standing together in a corner. I was not interested in them, but I could not help hearing Miles calling some one, presumably Gunning, an infernal cad. Rodgers appeared to be trying to moderate Miles' passion. He said something about not making a scene, and added the word "here" in sinister tones. He was doing the villain in the piece, and had practiced speaking that kind of way so much that it came quite natural to him. Gunning was standing by himself at the far side of the stage. As I approached him I saw that he was fumbling with the hilt of his sword. I thought for a moment that he had gone suddenly mad and intended to kill me, but his play with the sword must have been pure nervousness. What he actually did was apologise.

"I'm frightfully sorry, Major," he said. "I give

you my word of honour that I didn't mean to. It came over me quite suddenly, and I couldn't help it."

"You'd better go home at once," I said. "If you were drunk there would be some excuse for you; but as things stand, the only proper thing for you is to apply to-morrow for a transfer to some other district and not show your face in public till you get it. The theatricals, of course, can't come off now. They're utterly ruined."

Gunning did not say another word. He was so much ashamed of himself that he did not even attempt to change his clothes. He sneaked out of the house just as he was, in pink satin breeches and silk stockings. Young Miles and Jack Rodgers did not wait to change their clothes either. They left shortly after Gunning did.

I had no particular wish to meet the rector, who would certainly attack me as soon as he had finished comforting Minnie. The remaining members of the company gathered round me, and were babbling madly, asking questions which I could not answer. I thought that the best, certainly the most agreeable, thing for me to do was to go home. I got my overcoat and slipped away.

It was very fortunate indeed that I did so. Near the bottom of the avenue I came upon Miles, Rogers and Gunning. They were fighting. Gunning had his back to a clump of laurel-trees and was putting up a pretty good defence, considering that his oppo-



nents were two to one. I shouted to them to stop at once. Miles, who is at Sandhurst and has some idea of discipline, obeyed me. Gunning looked round to see who I was. Rodgers, who all through the rehearsals had shown a contempt for my authority, seized his opportunity and knocked Gunning down. The laurel-bushes broke his fall, but the blow was a nasty one. Miles appealed to me.

"Let's thrash him, Major," he said. "He deserves it."

I could not deny that he did, but I happen to be a man of some position and a magistrate. It was impossible for me to stand by and watch with approval an aggravated assault upon a police officer. I do not know that the law takes a specially severe view of the battery of a policeman, but I imagine that it would be much more difficult to hush up a case of the kind than it would be if the victim were some unofficial person. I took Miles and Rodgers each by an arm and led them from the field of battle. They came with me without resistance, but they kept binding themselves by frightful oaths not to rest until they were savagely revenged on Gunning. Miles, I recollect, had a plan for inducing the police officer to accompany him to France, and there forcing him to fight a duel with revolvers. Rodgers favoured simpler forms of brutality. "Mash him up" was one of the phrases he used, and I understood that his football boots were to be the chosen instruments.

I conducted these two young men to their homes and bound them over to attempt no further violence until the next morning. Then I went to my own house and settled down to a cigar, which I needed badly.

At ten o'clock a mounted messenger galloped up to my door. In stories which deal with love and duelling mounted messengers always gallop; in real life they usually trot. But this one did actually gallop. He was one of the grooms from Lisnally Castle, and Mrs. Lowe, so he told me, had ordered him to gallop. She has a very strongly developed taste for the theatrical. I went to the door myself, and the man handed me a note with the information that no answer was required. It was, of course, from Mrs. Lowe.

"Dear Major," she wrote. "It's all right. I've settled the whole affair in the most satisfactory possible way. The play will come off to-morrow night and will be a flaming success."

I did not see how Mrs. Lowe could possibly have settled the matter. She might have pacified Minnie. She might, though it seemed very unlikely, have talked the rector into a mood of Christian forgiveness towards Gunning. But she could not have known anything about the battle which had been fought on her avenue. Miles and Rodgers would certainly not act on the same stage with Gunning. Their feelings were too bitter to be concealed, and Gunning himself could scarcely appear with a black

eye. I was quite sure that his eye would be black after the way Rodgers hit him. Besides, no man with any self-respect could be expected to fling his arms around the neck of a girl who had smacked his face twice in public. Mrs. Lowe was over-sanguine. Her note did not cheer me up in the least.

At half-past ten the rector knocked at my door. He looked shaken and extremely nervous. I felt sorry for the poor man, so I went downstairs and got a bottle of champagne. I make a point of keeping a dozen bottles or so in the house, though I cannot afford to drink the wine except on great occasions. The rector is usually a teetotaler, but he drank half that bottle, and would have drunk more if I had not stopped him. Things were bad enough without any additional scandal, and there would have been additional scandal of a very serious kind if the rector had gone staggering home from my house at midnight. I got his story out of him bit by bit. It appeared that Minnie had been most unreasonable, had raged against everyone, and had blamed Mrs. Lowe and me for making a scene. The rector said, and I quite agreed with him, that it was Minnie herself who had made the scene. If she objected to scenes she ought not to have smacked Gunning's face. Nothing the rector or Mrs. Lowe could do was any use. Minnie simply became more outrageous when they reasoned with her. Then Gunning arrived at the house and asked to be

allowed to see Minnie. The rector, of course, refused permission, but he went out to the hall himself and had an interview with Gunning. That unfortunate young man was in a horrid condition. His eye was swelling rapidly. A kind of cloak which he wore, made of thin silk, was in rags. The padding of the calves of his legs had somehow slipped down and made his ankles look as if they were enormously swollen. The rector thought at first that he had sprained them both badly, and wondered how he managed to walk. Gunning said he wanted to apologise to Minnie, but the rector cut him short, and told him to go home at once and never to dare to go near Minnie again. Gunning went after that, slowly, like a man in deep distress.

The rector went back to the dressing-room and told Mrs. Lowe what he had seen, speaking in a whisper. Minnie, of course, heard all he said, although she was supposed to be insensible at the time. The moment the rector mentioned Gunning's eye she jumped up and ran out of the room.

The rector and Mrs. Lowe stood staring at each other, wondering what they ought to do. In the end they both went to look for Minnie. They tried various rooms, and came back at last to the hall. There Minnie met them. She came in through the front door, leading Gunning with her, and announced that she and he were engaged to be married.



"I don't like it," said the rector. "I don't like it at all."

"But you can't help it," I said.

"As far as I can make out there has been an understanding between them for some time back, not a regular engagement, but a sort of mutual understanding."

"Then why did Minnie object so violently when——?"

"It was only an understanding," said the rector. "They hadn't gone to those extremes."

"Still—any understanding must have led her to expect——"

"I didn't like to cross-question her, but I imagine she didn't think anything of the sort would have happened just then."

"It was rather public," I said.

The theatricals went on and were a great success, though the last act of the play was not finished on the night of the performance. I spent most of the day arguing with Miles and Rodgers. It was all I could do to persuade them to act. I succeeded in the end only by representing Minnie's original understanding with Gunning as something much more definite than it actually was. Young Miles gave in sulkily.

"Of course," he said, "if a fellow was engaged to a girl, or even engaged to be engaged, he has a perfect right to—you know the sort of thing I mean. But what I want to say is, that if a fellow is, then



other fellows ought to be told. It's an utterly rotten thing not to, and I should call it bad form."

Jack Rodgers took a different line. Once he grasped the fact of the understanding, he exonerated Gunning completely, and laid the whole blame on Minnie.

"I've always known," he said, "that she was a deceitful beast. If she didn't like Gunning kissing her, she ought not to have got engaged to him. If she did like it—though why he wanted to do it I can't imagine—she oughtn't to have smacked his face. But that's Minnie all over."

I think it is logic in which Jack Rodgers takes honours at college.

The company played to an audience excited to the highest possible pitch. Mrs. Lowe had collected about a hundred and fifty people into the long gallery at Lisnally Castle, and I am sure that every single one of them had heard an erroneous version of the story of Minnie's engagement. When we reached the great scene in the third act there was an absolutely breathless silence. When Gunning—dreadfully disfigured by the condition of his eye—flung his arms round Minnie's neck and followed the stage direction, the whole audience rose and cheered in the most terrific way. We could not get on with the play, for the cheering was continuous and drowned every effort which the actors made to speak. We had to let the curtain down at last on Minnie and Gunning still locked in each other's arms.

## XIX.—ELEANOR'S ENTERPRISE

**M**Y DEAR ELEANOR," said Lady Kenure, decisively, "the thing is simply preposterous. The Archdeacon, I am quite sure, thoroughly agrees with me."

Eleanor Brooks looked contemptuously at the Archdeacon. She, also, was quite sure that he would agree with Lady Kenure. He was a plump, kindly little man who loved quiet, and therefore took Lady Kenure's side in all matters of dispute. He had been invited to afternoon tea, just as the prophet Balaam was invited to spend a week with the King of Moab, in order that he might add the weight of an ecclesiastical malediction to the condemnation already pronounced on Eleanor's enterprise. He set down his cup with a sigh and cleared his throat.

"Miss Brooks' plan," he said mildly, "is highly creditable to her. It is an evidence of rare good feeling; but it must, I fear, be regarded as impracticable."

He spoke pompously, very much as he did in the pulpit, but not because such a way of talking was natural or pleasant to him. No man was simpler, no man less conscious of his own dignity on ordinary occasions than the Archdeacon. But when he

was in the presence of Lady Kenure he could not help expressing himself in rounded periods.

"You hear what the Archdeacon says," said Lady Kenure to her niece. "Your plan is quite impracticable. I felt sure that he would agree with me."

"I am sorry," said Eleanor obstinately, "that I cannot agree either with you or the Archdeacon."

"Your uncle," said Lady Kenure, "is seriously angry, very seriously angry indeed."

Eleanor smiled. The Archdeacon's eyes—neither of the ladies was looking at him—twinkled. It was not easy for any one who knew Lord Kenure to be much frightened by the threat of his anger. He was an old gentleman who had long before, in the early years of his married life, learned to take a humorous view of life. He and the Archdeacon had a good deal in common, and were excellent friends. They both made a habit of agreeing with Lady Kenure.

"The philanthropic methods," said the Archdeacon, "adapted for the amelioration of the lapsed masses of the great English cities would be quite out of place in Western Connaught. As I understand you, Miss Brooks, you propose to establish what is called a settlement among our poor people similar to those which are doing such excellent work in the East End of London."

"I hope to do that in the end," said Eleanor Brooks, "but at first I shall simply take lodgings in one of the cottages. I shall learn by personal experience how the people live, get into touch with

them, and gradually elevate them. A settlement, as we understand the word in England, may come afterwards. I must begin by mastering the problem of these agricultural slums——”

“Preposterous,” said Lady Kenure.

“An important Government Board,” said the Archdeacon, “is already engaged——”

“You will understand, Eleanor,” said Lady Kenure, “that if you persist in this absurd plan you will render it impossible for me to ask you here again. I cannot have you in this house if you make a public fool of yourself.”

“My dear aunt,” said Eleanor, “I’ve lived and worked in a London settlement ever since I left Girton, and you never made the slightest objection to——”

“What is possible in London,” said Lady Kenure, “is out of the question here. London and Connaught are entirely different places. The Archdeacon, I am sure, agrees with me in that.”

The Archdeacon did, and said so. He even appealed to Miss Brooks, calling on her to admit that her aunt’s statement was true. She turned on him.

“I can’t understand,” she said, “how you can be content to live in the midst of all this degradation and misery without making the smallest effort to elevate the poor people around you. As a clergyman, I should have supposed——”

“Eleanor,” said Lady Kenure, “I shall not allow

you to speak disrespectfully of the Church in this house."

"There is a Government Board," said the Archdeacon, "which is using every effort to——"

"If," said Lady Kenure, interrupting him and addressing her niece, "you have no more sense of decency than to mix up the sacred truths of religion with your own ridiculous fads, I am exceedingly sorry that I asked the Archdeacon here this afternoon. You ought to consider——"

The Archdeacon felt for his hat, which he had laid down beside his chair.

"If Miss Brooks," he said, rising to his feet as he spoke, "would take counsel with some of the officials of the Government Board of which I spoke, men who have been engaged for years in the kind of work which Miss Brooks has at heart——"

"I don't wonder that you are going," said Lady Kenure. "After the way Eleanor has spoken to you I couldn't expect——"

She rang the bell, and the Archdeacon left the room in charge of a servant.

## II

"His lordship," said the footman, "would be obliged if you'd speak to him for a few minutes in the library."

Lord Kenure rose from a deep chair and welcomed the Archdeacon. He told the footman to



shut the door, and then took a box of cigars from the chimney-piece.

"You need one," he said. "You must. Have a nip of whisky?"

The Archdeacon refused the whisky, but he lit a cigar. He felt that his nerves required soothing.

"How did it end?" asked Lord Kenure.

"It hasn't exactly ended yet," said the Archdeacon. "But I think that Miss Brooks will get her own way. She's very like Lady Kenure in some respects."

"Very. That's what makes things so difficult for me."

"I don't see what you can do in the matter," said the Archdeacon. "Lady Kenure said you would be very angry, but I don't think Miss Brooks believed her."

"Did you succeed in making out exactly what it is she means to do?—Eleanor, I mean. I've heard the subject discussed a good deal, but somehow I failed to pick up the details. They both seemed to think I understood; but I didn't."

"Miss Brooks," said the Archdeacon, "means to go and live in one of the cabins——"

"On my estate?"

"So I understand. She wants to get into touch with the people's life in order that she may elevate them and——"

"Did she say elevate?"

"I think so. She certainly meant it."

"Good heavens!" said Lord Kenure, "how frightful!"

"It is. The people won't understand it in the least. It's all very well doing that kind of thing in London. I don't know much about London, but I've been led to believe that the lapsed masses there are educated up to philanthropy, and like it. Our people are quite different. They won't have the remotest idea what she's at, and they won't know how to treat her. It will be very awkward, very awkward indeed. Almost anything may happen."

"We must do our best," said Lord Kenure, "to save her from serious unpleasantness. I have a great affection for Eleanor. I shouldn't like——"

"But what can we do? We're perfectly helpless."

"We might select a house for her to go to," said Lord Kenure, "a decent house in which they could give her a room to herself."

"I doubt if she'd go to it to please you."

"She wouldn't, of course; but you might recommend her strongly not to go to that particular house, and I should definitely forbid her."

"Ah!" said the Archdeacon.

"She's very like her aunt in some respects," said Lord Kenure. "Now, can you suggest a house?"

"Tom Geraghty, of Cloonacarragh, is a respectable man, and his wife is a very decent woman. They have seven children, but I think they could manage to pack in so that Miss Brooks could have the room at the back of the kitchen."

"Could you see Tom some time to-morrow and explain things to him a bit?"

"Of course."

"Get him to understand," said Lord Kenure, "that when she begins to elevate him he's to be elevated, gradually, of course, but without making a fuss about it. I'll pay anything you think reasonable up to a pound a week."

"Tom will be all right," said the Archdeacon. "The whole difficulty will be with his wife. You see, the elevating is sure to begin inside the house. It'll be very hard on Mrs. Geraghty. She has enough on her hands as it is with seven children."

"I suppose I'd better give her a pound a week, too. It'll come very expensive if Eleanor holds out for any time."

"She won't," said the Archdeacon, confidently.

"I'll send down some house-linen," said Lord Kenure; "I expect the Geraghty's sheets——"

"I don't think they'll have any sheets."

"And food, of course. You must arrange that with Mrs. Geraghty."

"I'm sure," said the Archdeacon, "that Miss Brooks will insist on eating exactly what the Geraghtys have. She spoke in the most determined way. I don't think she'll agree——"

"Then I must feed the whole Geraghty family while she's there. I shall send cold pies and boiled hams and pressed beef and things of that sort down to the rectory every evening, and you must get Tom

Geraghty to fetch them after dark. Mrs. Geraghty will present them at meal times as if they were the ordinary food of the family. I don't suppose Tom or the children will object."

"Not in the least; but——"

The Archdeacon paused. He saw a serious objection to the plan, but he did not like to put it into words. Lady Kenure, following the advice given by Solomon's mother, looked well to the ways of her household, and it would not be easy to smuggle large quantities of pies, hams, and beef out of the kitchen of Kenure Castle without detection.

"The Geraghtys," said the Archdeacon, "will be delighted, but——"

Lord Kenure caught his meaning.

"I'll pay for it all myself," he said; "and I'll tip the cook to keep her quiet. After all, why shouldn't I tip my own cook? I'm constantly having to tip other people's butlers. I suppose I shall have to tip the housemaid, too, so as to get the sheets and things. I suppose it is the housemaid, the upper housemaid, that has the charge of them. Do you happen to know, Archdeacon, if it is the upper housemaid? There's no use my tipping the wrong woman. This business will be expensive enough without that."

"I don't know," said the Archdeacon. "There's a servant called the stillroom maid, and it might be her."

"It's not," said Lord Kenure. "She manages the



jam. I know that. They'd never give the jam and bed-clothes to the same woman. Think how unpleasant it would be if she went straight from the one to the other without washing her hands."

"I still think," said the Archdeacon, "that it would be much better if Miss Brooks could be persuaded to consult the officials of the Board. I'm sure they'd find her a job of some sort which would suit her. They employ all kinds of people, and I expect they'd be glad enough to give Miss Brooks a roving inspectorship, especially as she wouldn't want to be paid."

"There's no use talking about that."

"I suppose not. But wouldn't it be as well for you to try her?"

"You tell me," said Lord Kenure, "that her mind is made up, and if it is we can't alter it. She's very like her aunt in some respects, and you know as well as I do——"

"Yes," said the Archdeacon sadly.

"You see the Geraghtys," said Lord Kenure, "and I'll make all arrangements with the cook and the housemaid. We can do no more."

### III

A week later the Archdeacon dined at Kenure Castle. He had the honour of giving his arm to Lady Kenure and the pleasure of sitting opposite a pleasant-looking girl, another niece, this time quite



unlike her aunt in appearance and character, who had been summoned by telegram to take Eleanor's place in the household. She chatted cheerfully about motoring in France and appeared to be uninterested in any branch of philanthropic work. Eleanor's enterprise was not even mentioned during dinner. Afterwards, when the ladies had left the room, the Archdeacon introduced the subject.

"Tom Geraghty was up with me last night," he said.

"Well?" said Lord Kenure. "How is she getting on? She's had two days of it now."

"Capitally so far," said the Archdeacon. "There's hardly been a hitch. Tom likes her greatly, and his wife is getting reconciled to the situation."

"I suppose she's scarcely got into her stride yet. I mean to say she hasn't started trying to elevate them."

"Oh, yes, she has. She began at once. The very minute she arrived she swept out the kitchen and then offered to cook the dinner. Mrs. Geraghty said there was no necessity for her to trouble about that, because the dinner was all cooked except the potatoes. It was, you know. She had the cold chicken pie, the ham, and the pressed beef which had been sent down the night before."

"I hope she didn't bring them all out at once. That would be likely to rouse Eleanor's suspicions."

"No," said the Archdeacon, "I warned her not to do that. I told her to begin with the ham. She

kept the pie and the pressed beef in a cupboard until she noticed the thorough way Miss Brooks cleaned the kitchen. Then she hid them under the bed and told the children she'd skelp any one she found crawling after them. Dinner went off very well. Miss Brooks said she supposed the ham came from one of their own pigs, and Tom said it did, and that he'd cured it himself. By the way, I wish you'd tell the cook not to glaze the next one. Tom said she asked his wife a lot of questions about the glazing, and Mrs. Geraghty had to say that the eldest girl learned to do it from a travelling cookery teacher the Board sent round."

"That might very well have been true," said Lord Kenure. "The last cookery demonstration that was held in the convent they were icing cakes."

"It might have been true," said the Archdeacon, "but as a matter of fact it wasn't. The Geraghty girl has never been near a cookery class."

"What happened next?"

"After dinner Miss Brooks helped to wash up. Then she took Mrs. Geraghty out for a walk and talked to her about the way mothers ought to bring up children. Tom says his wife took it very well, better than he would have expected, considering that she has seven children and must know something about them, whereas Miss Brooks has none."

"That wouldn't prevent her knowing all about them," said Lord Kenure. "Her aunt has no children either, and she runs a Mothers' Union."

"In the evening," said the Archdeacon, "there was very nearly being a row. Miss Brooks wanted to wash all the children—bath them, you know. The children naturally objected. So did Mrs. Geraghty. She regarded the proposal as a personal insult."

"I expect Eleanor bathed them all the same."

"She did. Tom took his wife outside the house, and reasoned with her. He had a hard job, and in the end he had to tell her that you were paying him £2 a week to be kind to Miss Brooks, as well as the food you sent down. He hadn't mentioned the money before, thinking, I suppose, that he'd be able to keep it in his own pocket."

"Did he own up to the whole £2 at once?"

"No, he didn't. He began at 7s. 6d., and rose by 5s. a week, until his wife agreed to have the children bathed. She gave in at 37s. 6d., and then he thought he might as well confess to the extra half-crown. He was in a bad temper when he had finished, and by his own account he threatened the children in the most frightful way if any one of them dared so much as to whimper, however hard Miss Brooks scrubbed them. Mrs. Geraghty did her best with them, too, once she heard about the money. She promised them a slice of ham each to eat in bed if they allowed Miss Brooks to do what she liked to them."

"I should think that nearly finished the ham."

"It did. Fortunately, they had eggs enough to go round at breakfast next morning. Miss Brooks

gave Mrs. Geraghty a great talking to about the way she made tea. She threw out what was in the tea-pot—stewed, I expect. You know the way the country people like it. She said it was poison, and made some fresh. Tom said it was the poorest stuff he ever tasted, but he put up with it. After breakfast Miss Brooks turned to and tidied the house. Mrs. Geraghty was perfectly right in moving the pie and the pressed beef when she did. The cupboard was one of the first places Miss Brooks went for. She threw out a lot of things. Tom says his wife said they were valuable clothes, and that he expected you'd pay for them."

"I shall have to, of course."

"Miss Brooks called them dirty rags and used a word about them which Tom appeared to think was profane, but, as far as I could make out, it was nothing worse than 'insanitary.' That kept her pretty well occupied till dinner time. There was very nearly being trouble then over the pie."

"Was it glazed, too?"

"It was, but that wouldn't have mattered. Mrs. Geraghty had explained the glazing quite satisfactorily. Unfortunately, Miss Brooks recognised the dish. It appears to have been some peculiar kind of earthenware——"

"Good heavens!" said Lord Kenure. "What a fool the cook is! She must have sent it down in one of those purple dishes my wife bought two years ago in Bavaria. No wonder Eleanor looked crooked



at it. I don't suppose there's any of that crockery in Ireland outside of this house. What happened?"

"Tom couldn't think what to say. All he could do, according to his own account, was to wink at his wife. Miss Brooks caught him in the act. Whether she had any suspicion of the truth or not, I can't say. If she had, Mrs. Geraghty put her off the track completely."

"How did she do it? I'd have thought that was an uncommonly nasty situation."

"She said she'd stolen the dish, and told a long story about one day she was up here selling eggs, and saw the dish lying outside on the kitchen window-sill. Miss Brooks didn't say a word at the time, but afterwards she gave Mrs. Geraghty an awful talking to. The poor woman was sitting under a haystack when Tom found her. She said she wouldn't go through it again if you doubled the money you were giving. It took Tom all his time to pacify her. In the evening Miss Brooks bathed all the children again. Fortunately Tom had bought twopennyworth of sweets, thinking something of the sort might happen, so there wasn't much trouble. Mrs. Geraghty was too cowed to make a fuss, but she wouldn't let Miss Brooks touch the baby. The rest of them she left to their fate."

"I don't suppose it'll do them any harm," said Lord Kenure.

"I don't know. That amount of washing must be very severe when you're not used to it. Tom



says the eldest girl had a frightful cold after the first night, and that he wouldn't be surprised if she was in consumption this morning. I didn't hear how she was."

"She'll hardly die, I suppose?"

"She'll die some day," said the Archdeacon; "and even if it's not till she's eighty everybody will always put it down to the washing. They'll say it undermined her constitution."

A footman entered the room while the Archdeacon was speaking. "I beg pardon, sir," he said, "but there's a man of the name of Geraghty at the door who wants to see you."

"Geraghty!" said the Archdeacon. "Not Tom Geraghty?"

"I'll inquire, sir."

"If it is Tom Geraghty," said Lord Kenure, "you'd better show him in here."

"Something must have gone wrong," said the Archdeacon when the footman left the room; "something serious, I fear."

"Can that child possibly have died?"

"I don't think so. Not yet. The most rapid cases last a few weeks."

"Perhaps he's only come to return the pie-dish. Eleanor would very likely insist on some act of reparation of that kind."

The footman, having satisfied himself that he had got the right man, ushered Tom Geraghty into the dining-room.

"Is she dead?" asked the Archdeacon, "or is it only the pie-dish?"

"She is not dead," said Geraghty, "but she's gone from us after using language the like of which I never listened to, and what's more, won't stand."

"You ought to have brought her up better," said the Archdeacon. "It must have been from you that she learned to swear."

"Brought her up!" said Geraghty. "If I'd had the bringing up of that one I'd——"

"Who are you talking about?" asked Lord Kenure. "Your own daughter or Miss Brooks?"

"It's the young lady," said Geraghty, "that his reverence sent down to us. Faith, it's hard-earned money what a man would get for keeping the likes of her. Never a minute's peace there's been in the house since she came into it, and at the latter end she turned outrageous altogether."

"What happened?" asked the Archdeacon.

"Take a glass of whisky," said Lord Kenure. "It's there on the sideboard behind you; and then tell us what has happened as calmly as you can."

The whisky did something to restore Tom Geraghty's temper.

"There was talk at dinner," he said, "about the bit of meat that was in it, the same that his lordship sent down."

"The pressed beef," said Lord Kenure. "Was there anything wrong with it?"

"I wouldn't ask to fault it myself," said Geraghty,

"but the young lady seemed someways uneasy in her mind about it. There was no end to the questions she was asking. At the latter end herself said it was a present she had from a niece of her own that was cook in a big hotel beyond in America, who did be sending a trifle home to the children now and again."

"Did she believe that?" asked Lord Kenure.

"I wouldn't say she did, but she let it pass. And we got on quiet and easy enough till near bedtime, barring that she had the children's tempers riz with washing them again, and me after forgetting to buy sweets for them. Anyway that passed off too, and away with her to bed. I'll say that much for her, she was always one for going early to her bed. Well, hardly ever had I got my pipe lit before she was in on us, and her with very little on her, so that I'd be ashamed. 'What's up with you now?' says herself. 'Is it mad you are?' 'Look at that,' says she, holding up the end of one of the sheets your lordship was after sending down for her. 'What of it?' says I, 'is it not good enough for you?' 'Look at it,' she says, 'what's that in the corner of it? Is all you have in this house stole?' says she. I looked at it, and sure enough there was a kind of a little crown in the corner of it and a big 'K' underneath that. 'You blasted robbers,' says she, 'May the devil——'"

"Come now," said Lord Kenure, "those can't be her exact words.

"If they're not," said Geraghty, "they're mighty like them. Only hers was worse. I'd have stood it myself on account of the respect I have for your lordship and his reverence here, but herself up and told her the truth."

"The whole of it?" said Lord Kenure.

"Every word," said Geraghty, "and you never seen a young lady so put about. At the end of that she went back and put her clothes on her——"

The footman entered the room while Geraghty was speaking.

"Her ladyship's compliments, my lord, and she'd be obliged if your lordship would join her in the big drawing-room."

"James," said Lord Kenure, "is Miss Brooks there?"

"Miss Brooks has just come in, my lord."

"Come along, Archdeacon," said Lord Kenure.

"I think," said the Archdeacon, "that I shall slip off home. You will make my apologies to Lady Kenure."

"No, I won't. You shall come with me. You are just as much responsible as I am."

He took the Archdeacon by the arm, and they went together into the drawing-room. Lady Kenure sat on the sofa, with her arm round Eleanor, who looked dishevelled. The other niece sat on a remote chair by herself, and seemed nervous and frightened. Lord Kenure glanced at the Archdeacon. His eyes



expressed apprehension. The situation was sufficiently uncomfortable.

"I want some explanation," said Lady Kenure, "of the way in which Eleanor has been treated."

"Tom Geraghty," said Lord Kenure, "is still in the dining-room. I will go and fetch him."

"Let me go," said the Archdeacon.

"Who is this Tom Geraghty?"

"He's the man in whose house I stayed," said Eleanor.

"I always said the whole thing was preposterous, preposterous and absurd to the last degree, but——"

"It was," said Lord Kenure, with an air of relief. "I don't see that Eleanor has any one to blame but herself."

"But," said Lady Kenure emphatically, "that's no reason why the poor girl should have been held up to public ridicule. Will you kindly explain to me——"

"The cook," said Lord Kenure, "glazed the ham and the pie without orders from me. I suppose she glazed the pressed beef, too. I didn't tell her to."

"I mean to speak to the cook to-morrow morning," said Lady Kenure, "and pack her back to London as soon as ever I can get another."

"She deserves it thoroughly," said Lord Kenure.

"But that will not explain the extraordinary conspiracy——"

"It was the Archdeacon who suggested——"

"I suggested nothing," said the Archdeacon, "except that Miss Brooks should get into touch with the officials of the Board which has charge of this district. I still think that would have been the proper course for her to take. In fact, I am more convinced of it than ever."

"Eleanor, my dear," said Lady Kenure, turning to her niece, "you are over-tired. I think you had better go to bed. I shall find out from your uncle exactly what has happened."

Eleanor, followed by the other niece, who seemed glad to escape, left the room.

"I think," said the Archdeacon, "that I had better say good-night."

"Good-night!" said Lady Kenure, frigidly. "I do not profess to understand how you can reconcile your conscience—your conscience as a dignitary of the Church—to the part you have played in humiliating an unfortunate girl, who was trying to do the sort of work which you have systematically neglected."

"Miss Brooks said something like that before," said the Archdeacon. "I can only say that as long as there is a Government Board——"

"Good-night!" said Lady Kenure, decisively.

Lord Kenure looked sadly after the Archdeacon. Then he sat down and folded his hands. He had a bad half-hour before him.

## XX.—THE CAREYS

THEIR home is in the flat midland of Ireland, in one of those districts in which, to use our favourite euphemism, there is "trouble." I need not describe the trouble. Politicians have done that, done it till nobody wants it done again—half of them eloquently insisting upon its extreme troublesomeness, the other half with equal eloquence maintaining that "trouble" is far too strong a word to apply to innocent amusement. The Careys, Peter and Affie, a pair of brothers and both young, are in the thick of the trouble whatever it is. All the authorities give them a bad character. The parish priest spoke to me about them guardedly.

"They're not the boys they ought to be," he said, "though their old mother that lives with them is as decent a woman as you'd meet."

Questioned about their misdeeds, he became very vague. They did not drink. He admitted that.

"Nobody ever saw the sign of it on them; but they're careless in their religious duties; though I wouldn't go as far as to say they were disrespectful to the clergy. It was the same with their father before them, but that was before my time."

The police sergeant was more explicit. It was he, and not I, who introduced the subject of the

Careys. I was only vaguely curious. To him, as to most other people in the neighbourhood, Peter and Affie are a sort of obsession. All subjects of conversation lead to them in the end.

"They're daring," he said, "mighty daring. There's little they wouldn't be fit to do in the way of bad work. If there's trouble of any sort going——"

"Cattle driving?" I suggested. "Boycotting?"

The neighbourhood has a reputation for both, and I thought that the Careys' daring might find expression in one or the other.

"And worse," said the sergeant significantly. "Whatever it might be in the way of lawlessness, them Careys will be at the head and tail of it. It was the same with their father before them and the old Land League. I wasn't in it them times, but I'm told he was a terrible man, and the trouble wouldn't have been the half what it was only for him."

The belief in heredity is extraordinarily strong amongst us. The parish priest also holds the view that the Careys' teeth are on edge on account of the sour grapes which their fater ate.

"It was in old Carey's yard," the sergeant went on—"that's the grandfather of Peter and Affie and the father of the man that was in it in the bad times—it was in his yard that the police found the arms buried when the Fenians was out. It was



him that was the chief man amongst the Fenians in these parts."

I began to feel sorry for Peter and Affie. With an ancestry like theirs and a fixed determination on the part of everybody to give them a bad name, it is almost inevitable that they should plunge into violent courses.

"Drink?" I suggested. Like charity, drink covers a multitude of sins and is a recognised and admitted excuse for almost any kind of wrongdoing.

"They wouldn't touch a drop," said the sergeant emphatically, "neither the one of them nor yet the other. It would be better for them if they did. Where the drink's going there'll not be much besides. There's worse things than the drink."

This view was new to me. It may be sound. I imagine that it is sound when there is question of privy conspiracy, rebellion, battle, murder, and sudden death. The original Carey, the Fenian, would hardly have kept the arms buried as long as he did if he had been given to whisky. Men babble in their cups. However, the Careys are no business of mine, neither the bygone generations of them nor the present Peter and Affie. I was going to see the widow Conway, quite a different sort of person.

She lives alone in a tiny cabin which stands at the end of a long muddy bohireen. She had a husband once and a fine family of sons and daughters, two sons and three daughters. They are all gone

from her now. The husband, the eldest son and two of the daughters have taken the longest journey of all, the children by the way of consumption, the husband mysteriously, "after a vomiting and a terrible pain that the doctor could do nothing for." So she told me. The remaining son and daughter took the other journey, hardly less inevitable, "across the big sea." They are in America. The mother lives alone, a broken woman, half crippled with rheumatism, on the patch of stony land which her husband, and after him the son who died, used to till.

I found her seated on a low stool,—“creepy” stools we call these seats—beside a smouldering turf fire in a room which was very ill-lit. The fire was smoking, or had been smoking, which made it still harder to see at first. It was only after some minutes that I discerned a calf standing in a corner barricaded in with an old packing case. It seemed a placid, friendly calf, well satisfied with the warmth of its lodging. Mrs. Conway brought forward a chair for me and wiped it with her apron. Then, by way of welcome, she made up the fire, piling on fresh sods of brown turf. I had noticed a fine stack of turf in the yard as I approached the door. I remarked on it, saying that she was fortunate in having so large a supply of fuel.

“I have good neighbours,” she said. “If it wasn’t for them I wouldn’t have a sod at all. How would I be going to the bog to save it?”

Saving turf is laborious work, work for strong men, not for a rheumatic old woman, and carting turf home is a long job when the bog is five miles away.

"It's wonderful," she said, "the way they do it for me every year, fetching it home and all, and never a penny they'll take for doing it, not even if I had it to give them; but sure they know well that I haven't."

It appeared that this was not by any means all that the neighbours did for her.

"When it's the time for saving my little lock of hay," she said, "them boys will be down here at six o'clock in the morning, taking a turn at it before ever they begin their own work. And in the evening when another would be wanting to amuse himself they'll be down here again until such time as they have it saved. It's badly I'd do without them."

"They're good neighbours," I said, "whoever they are."

"You may say that, and it isn't even as if they were some of our own."

"Our own?" I was doubtful of the phrase.

"I am a Protestant," she said, "and all that ever belonged to me were Protestants, and they're belonging to the other side."

Well, the gulf is wide enough. God knows; religious, political, social, even racial sometimes, in the far back part of it; it is not so wide, it appears, but

charity can bridge it across—the wonderful love of the poor for the poor which is the best sort of charity there is in the world. I felt that I wanted to know something more of these neighbours, the boys who worked early and worked late to save the widow's hay for her and bring home the widow's turf.

“Who are they?” I asked.

“It's the Careys,” she said. “Who else would it be? They're the only neighbours I have, for this is a backward place and lonely.”

“Is it Peter Carey?” I asked, “and his brother Affie?”

“It is. Sorra the better boys than them you'd find anywhere and it's often I do be thanking God that I have them. There's many a one wouldn't do the half what they do; and, what's more, they don't begrudge it. Was I telling you about Peter—that's the eldest of them—the time my cow died on me the day after the Christmas? It's her calf I have within in the house with me this minute, keeping the creature warm the way I'll be able to rear her with the help of God. I was not telling you, for I didn't see you since. Well, Peter Carey—”

I suppose Peter Carey and his brother Affie will be put in prison some day on account of their share in “the trouble that does be in it.” Their names will be bandied about by politicians who will want to have them prosecuted or will want to worry some one for prosecuting them. It will be cattle driv-



ing, or boycotting, or what the police sergeant calls "worse" that they will be accused of; and they will not have the blessing of their church when the time comes because they have never attended properly to their religious duties. Nevertheless I disagree with the philosophy which regards their sin as less venial than drinking, and I think that somewhere there will be another judgment pronounced on Peter and Affie. The widow's turf, and the hay, and the dying cow will be remembered there; perhaps even the daring will be counted for a kind of righteousness, the righteousness of blind men trying to go straight through a world whose ways are tortuous.

## XXI.—THIS LOST LAND

THE scene was quite a usual one. I suppose that the like of it might have been found in a hundred places that same afternoon: in England, in Scotland, and here in Ireland, with no very noticeable differences.

There was sunshine and a green lawn with a tennis net stretched across it. Men, most of them young and more or less athletic, in white flannels, striking at flying white balls; women in summer frocks, also white, with pink or blue hats, all of them gay. They, too, struck eagerly at the flying white balls. Two groups of spectators, some seated on chairs at one side of the lawn and obviously very much interested in the fate of the white balls and the powers of the strikers; players themselves, the members of this group, competitors in the tournament which was in progress. Others, a separate group, less interested or quite indifferent, the local aristocracy, with an air of being a little afraid of compromising their reputation for social aloofness by mingling with the baser folks who congregated at the other side of the lawn.

In the background there is a house and a gravel sweep. There are tables on the gravel spread with white cloths, covered with plates of cake and bread

and butter. A busy hostess, very eager to make her guests happy, pours out tea. A few of us stand round her and drink the tea.

I am most fortunate. I find myself beside a very charming lady with blue eyes, and she is kind enough to be conversational and pleasant. Her smiles are quite worth winning, and I, who am a dull dog on whom pretty people rarely smile, am grateful. I really try to listen attentively to what she says.

"I was down in Kerry last week, and so I missed the Horse Show. It was most unlucky, for I had a new hat especially for the occasion."

The Horse Show is a great function. It is the great function of Irish society. It is held in Dublin and every self-respecting man or woman in the country tries to be present at it. I murmured condolences, a little insincerely, for I have missed the Horse Show so often as to have become callous about my loss. Also I never on any single occasion was fortunate enough to have a new hat especially for it.

"Game," shouts an umpire from his table on the lawn. "Five games to four."

There is a clapping of hands among the interested spectators and a turning of heads in the other group. I found myself speculating on the nature of aristocracies. Why are some people superior to common delights? The attitude cannot be exciting. It must, one would think, be actually boring.

I suppose there must be compensations which I do not understand. Meanwhile there is desperate striking of flying white balls and I gather that the umpire will soon make another proclamation—"Five games all"—and there will be more applause. My companion is telling me about the trains in Kerry and expressing contempt for them. I have never been in a Kerry train, but I am willing to take her word for it that they go very slowly. Ah! it is as I anticipated. The umpire has shouted again and the match does stand five games all. There is a great clapping of hands. The local aristocracy, several men and women of it, seizes the opportunity for making a move towards tea.

"But there's one advantage about a slow train. You are able to see the country as you go along."

I agree, and watch the progress of our great people across the lawn. It is a pity that so few women can walk. I wonder if we men would make as bad an attempt if we were obliged to wear petticoats.

"There was a great stretch of bog," said my companion, "miles of it, grey, you know, with patches of brown, where the turf stacks stood, and even they looked greyish because it was raining. I never saw such desolation."

I am listening. The description of the Kerry bog goes on. I fill it in from my imagination. There was not a house in sight, nor a man nor a beast, just the grey bog and the misty rain; flat with not a hillock; a pool here and there where the turf had



been cut away, but no river or stream. There were three trees standing close to each other in a straight line rising out of the bog and breaking the intolerable grey of the low sky. I see the whole thing as she saw it out of the window of the train which went slowly.

"The middle tree was taller than the other two; and they reminded me of the crucifixion."

She laughed, with a sort of shame-faced merriment as she said this. I felt a sudden sense of relief. She had gone perilously near the abominable thing. If she had not laughed she would have confessed herself a sentimentalist. Heaven forbid that an Irish girl, a girl with large blue eyes and charming manners, would so forget all that is honourable and of good report, should so defile herself as to sentimentalise at a tennis tournament with a tea-cup in her hand. Nevertheless she saw and felt what we all see and feel now and then, what we escape from only because the gods have granted us the ability to laugh.

In a few minutes she will be running about the lawn, striking, I hope skilfully, at the flying white balls, and the umpire will be encouraging her with shouts of "Forty-fifteen," or some other frivolous combination of long suffering numbers. No one will then suspect her of having seen the vision any more than I suspect the eager group of onlookers or the other men and women who have now achieved their tea, of having seen or having felt. I miss the

end of her experiences in Kerry and the reiteration of her half mocking lament over the missing of the Horse Show. I am wondering whether any of us really escape seeing the grey bogs of this lost land and the three trees which remind us of the crucifixion and make us laugh when we think of them.

## XXII.—MRS. WILLIAMS

THE day was wet, even for the west of Ireland, unusually wet. The church offered a refuge and I went into it, leaving the muddy streets, the lowing cattle, and the heavy smell of a fair day in a little Connaught town. I found myself the spectator of rites not meant for me. Between twenty and thirty clergymen, old and young, were gathered in the church and listened to an exhortation delivered by an elderly dignitary, who spoke, not from the regular pulpit, but from the lectern. I felt myself an intruder, an eavesdropper, a spy upon the private devotions of worthy men. But the quietness and the soothing grey of the church attracted me. I was by no means inclined to go out again. I settled myself in a remote seat and compromised matters with my sense of honour by determining not to listen to one word which was said. Unfortunately there was nothing in the architecture of the church to absorb my attention. From a stained glass window close beside me I turned away my eyes lest they should behold vanity or worse. The artist had worked from the photograph of a deceased fat man, and had clad his person in garments of shape and colouring such as must have put his ghost to the blush. Nor could I lay my hands on anything to

read except a mutilated hymn-book printed in type impossible to my eyes in the light of that dreary afternoon. Then, by good luck, I noticed that the book-rest in front of me was scribbled over.

I leaned forward and read. Sissy Foster had written her name in a sprawling schoolchild's hand, digging with a sharp pencil into the soft pine wood. She must have been about twelve years old when she wrote, beguiling, perhaps, the tediousness of the Litany. The "Sissy" gave me a clue to her. She was, so the name or title seemed to indicate, the eldest of a family, the prematurely grave little mother of a tribe of small brothers, who had learned, each in turn, to lisp the recognition of relationship. At last, she herself had forgotten that she was really Muriel or Maud, and had accepted as name and description alike the pretty Sissy. I pictured her a gentle little maiden, with long, straight, fair hair, unnaturally careful, for poor mother's sake, of each clean pinafore. A little further along the book-rest I came to her again as Cis Foster. The handwriting, formed and fashionably square, witnessed that she was older, seventeen years old perhaps, or eighteen; not much more, for the Litany still evidently bored her. The changed spelling of the name told me something about her. To the Miss Foster of that date the younger brothers were boisterous schoolboys, troublesome creatures with tops and marbles and rough games. She was Sissy no more, but Cis, which is a name derived from



Cecilia, and full of romantic possibilities. Cecilia, at full length, is a stately maiden, aloof a little from common things, to be wooed gloriously by one in the guise of a prince. Cis smacks more of the world, of gay laughter, of daring attractiveness. Cis is the mistress of arts and wiles. She sports with the hearts of men. Miss Foster vacillated between the two ideals, and I have no doubt—it was springtime then—wore a pink cotton frock, ironed stiffly, wonderfully frilled.

Beside Cis Foster was another name in another writing, John Emmanuel Williams. He used to come there on Sunday evenings when Mrs. Foster, growing oldish now and a little worn, stayed at home; when Mr. Foster smoked his pipe with a secure feeling that one churchgoing of a Sunday was enough for any man; when the boys, young scamps, were birds'-nesting in the woods. Then Cis Foster and John Emmanuel Williams sat together, sharing the mutilated hymn-book, and the evening sun shone on them through the wide west door. Cis had a wonderful new pink frock in those days, and her cheeks glowed with a brighter pink. Then while prayers were being said for King Edward—this was in the early days of his reign—John Emmanuel wrote his name and Cis watched him. Further down the book-rest, in the very corner came one more inscription. The handwriting was Miss Foster's, but the words she wrote were "Mrs. Williams." This must have been an experi-

ment. After marriage, if she wrote at all, she would have written "Cis Williams," not "Mrs. Williams." Besides, after marriage a careful churchwarden would have moved her and John Emmanuel into a pew of their own. The "Mrs. Williams" must have been a delighted dip into the future, a daring attempt to realise beforehand anticipated joys. Perhaps John Emmanuel watched her while she wrote, blushed when she blushed, and afterwards mutilated the hymn-book in search of material for little notes during sermon time. It must have been autumn then, and in the half-lit church no prying eyes would see the passing of the folded paper or note the lingering touches of the hands.

The service, the special clerical devotions,—not that evensong in the early days of King Edward,—ended abruptly, and the clergy slipped past me towards the door. I joined myself to the one who walked last, guessing, by something of a proprietor's mien about him, that he was the proper pastor of the church. I offered him a share of my umbrella when we got outside, and then while he thanked me, asked my question.

"Did Cis Foster, who used to be Sissy Foster when she was a child, marry John Emmanuel Williams in the end?"

"Yes," he said. "I married them. He's a groom up at the big house. That was six years ago. She has four fine boys of her own now."

"Ah," I said, "she'll know how to manage them

after all the practice she had with her young brothers."

"She does," said the rector smiling. Then he turned on me abruptly. "But how do you come to know all about them? Surely you're a stranger here?"

"I don't actually know," I said. "I merely guess. I suppose she has given up wearing pink cotton frocks in summer time?"

"Did she ever wear pink cotton frocks?" he asked. "I don't remember."

"She certainly did," I said, "in 1903 or thereabouts. You must have been very unobservant; but of course the church was rather dark. I suppose she has a new hymn-book now?"

"I gave her one myself," said the rector, "the day she was married."

"You couldn't," I said, "have given her anything she wanted more. There are only about fourteen pages left in the old one."

### XXIII.—“WELL DONE”

**H**E lay on the bed, a shrunken, feeble figure of a man, with a withered, weather-scarred face, and toil-scarred hands. Over him was a quilt of crazy patchwork, hundreds and hundreds of coloured scraps sewn together, a monument of wonderfully patient toil, made thirty years before by a wife who is dead a long time now. Her works live after her—the quilt which covered him, the girl who stood by the fireplace, at whose birth the mother died, John, the first-born, four other girls, and Thomas, who stokes the engine of a steamer on the St. Lawrence river. Now “himself,” husband, father, widower, lay dying. Outside in the kitchen John sat over the fire and waited, a grizzled, unemotional, strong man of forty-five. The clergyman sat by the bedside. Near at hand was a table, standing unsteadily on the pitted earthen floor. It was spread with a white cloth, and on it were little silver vessels. Across the end of it lay the clergyman’s surplice. The old man had received the Sacrament for the last time, the Sacrament of which he had partaken a thousand times before, kneeling at the altar rails.

“If it’s pleasing to your reverence,” he said, “I’d



like to say over the Belief along with you the way we did be saying it at prayers in the church."

The clergyman nodded. He began the Apostle's Creed, and recited it clause by clause. The old man followed him. The girl at the fireplace stood rigidly upright, and her lips moved. She too was saying the familiar words. John, in the kitchen, rose from his stool and stood until the voices ceased. There was silence for a time and then the old man spoke again.

"Sarah," he said, "let you go out of this and wait along with John until I call for you. There's something I want his Reverence to do for me."

The girl left the room obediently. The ill-fitting door was closed behind her. The old man watched her go, glanced at the door, and then, turning himself with difficulty, leaned towards the edge of the bed. He spoke in a whisper.

"It would be right," he said, "that I'd settle about the farm and the stock and the bit of money I have before I go."

"It would," said the clergyman, "every man ought to do that."

"There's a bottle of ink and a pen there on the chimney piece, and paper along with them. If it wouldn't be troubling you too much, I'd be thankful if you'd get them and write down what I'd be telling you. Yourself would know how it ought to be done so as there'll be no trouble after."

It was no strange task for the clergyman. He

had made a hundred such wills before. His knowledge of legal phraseology was scanty, but no one afterwards disputed the validity of what he wrote.

"Let the farm go to John," said the old man. "The land there is here and the bit behind at Bundorragh. And let the stock go along with it, only the young heifer. I'd like Sarah would have the young heifer, and the right to her grass for as long as she's in it; and I hope that won't be long, for it's near time she was getting married. I'd like if John would make a way across the side of the hill where I cleared the furze bushes, so as a cart could get in off the road. It's what I had in my mind to do this long time, only my strength went from me. The place is backward the way it is, us not being able to get as much as the turf into it without we'd carry it on asses, and that's a drawback to any house. There'll be no need for you to write that down, your Reverence. John will do it when you bid him."

"He will. John's a good boy."

"And he's well fit to do it. It took me the best part of ten years before I got the hill rightly clear, working at it odd times when there wouldn't be much doing, and hard work it was. When I started on it it's hardly ever a sheep would be able to pick a bit there the way the bushes was so thick."

His eyes strayed to the window as he spoke. The hill lay opposite to the house, clean, and now brown where John had ploughed it up.

"There's fifty pounds in the bank," the old man went on. "Let Sarah have it, all but ten pounds. John will be getting a girl with a fortune, be the same more or less, when I'm gone from him, and he has the place to himself. The rest of the girls got their share when they married, and Sarah has a right to what's in it now, all but ten pounds."

"What about Lizzie?" said the clergyman. "Lizzie's not married, is she?"

"Lizzie's beyond in America. She had her chance like the rest of them. She had more chances than the rest of them, but she was stubborn. She wouldn't marry the boy I had laid out for her; and after that she wouldn't marry another, or a third on the top of him. She had it in her mind to go to America, and it's there she's gone. Let Sarah get the money. It's her has the best right to it; all but ten pounds."

The clergyman waited, pen in hand. He guessed the destiny of the ten pounds.

"I wouldn't like Lizzie to be thinking that I had any ill-will at her, for I haven't. It wouldn't be right for me now that I'm not long for this world. She went against me, and I told her she'd be better off out of this, and not to be standing in the way of her sisters, when I could see plain that she'd never marry, for the boys I got were decent boys, with good homes to offer her. I'd like she'd have the ten pounds, the way she'd know I've no ill-will at her. But let her not come home to get it. Let

your Reverence send it out to her. She's better where she is now she's there. If she was back she'd be only upsetting Sarah's mind, and maybe taking her out along with her."

"Is that all?" said the clergyman.

"It is all, and if you have it written down I'd be thankful if you'd keep it by you till I'm gone, and then see that things is done according to what I'm after telling you."

"Do you mean that you wish me to be your executor?"

"I leave it to your Reverence to settle that. There isn't one in the country I'd trust sooner than yourself. And now that I'm easy in my mind about the land and the money, there's one thing more that I'd like to speak to you about. Are you listening to me?"

"I am surely."

"Well, it's what I wouldn't tell to e'er a man only yourself, but I've been meaning to tell you this long time. It was six weeks ago or maybe more, any way it wasn't long before the Christmas. It was the first Sunday I gave up going in to prayers, and I was always a good one to go till I wasn't fit to face the hill on the way home out of the town without sitting down maybe twice to get my breath; and that's what I would be ashamed to do. John was at prayers, and Sarah along with him, and that was the way I came to be alone by myself in the house. I was sitting by the fire, and I was think-



ing of the hill beyond there, and the way it did be covered with furze bushes so as a sheep would hardly pick a bit in between them. I was going back over the job I had clearing it, and terrible work it was getting the roots hoked up. It would have suited me better to be reading my Bible when I couldn't go in to prayers, but what I'm telling you is the way it was, and what was in my mind at the time. All of a sudden there was hands laid on my head from behind like, the way I wouldn't see who was there. Nor I didn't try to see, for there was a kind of a dread on me knowing well I was alone in the house. I didn't say a word, but no more did He, only there did be a wonderful content on me. It's what I never told to e'er a one before, and I wouldn't be telling it to you now, only that I'd be easier in my mind if your Reverence knew. I could know by the feel of the hands on me that it was Himself, and He was pleased and I'd a right to be content. I *was* content too, and I knew that I hadn't long to stay here. I knew my strength wouldn't come back to me, and that it would have to be John that would make the way across the side of the hill out into the road. But I was contented in myself, with the feel of the hands on my head. Tell me this, now, your Reverence, for it's yourself would know the like if anybody would, was it *Him* that came to me that time?"

"I haven't the least doubt but it was."

"It's wonderful," said the old man. "I was thinking myself that it could only be Him. There's ne'er another only Him would do it, and this the backward kind of place that it is, and no way into it off the road, without you'd be climbing fences and walls. It's wonderful! And hadn't I the right to be contented when I could tell by the feel of the hands on me that He was pleased; though I wouldn't say there was much about me to please Him? For it's not easy for a man to be attending to his religious duties the way he should when he has a long family to rear, and herself gone from him with them young, and the like of that hill with the furze bushes on it opposite the house."

## XXIV.—BIDDY CANAVAN

**T**HE fact is," said the mistress of the house, "that she can't wash one little bit, and there's no use talking to her."

I was complaining of the condition of a flannel shirt which had returned to me in a curiously greasy state, considerably shrunk, and smelling strongly of soap. I felt bitterly on the subject, because the shirt was a new one and I had hoped the sort of things which no one but a fool does hope about flannel shirts.

"Why don't you dismiss her then and get some one who can wash?"

"She has three small children, and her husband is dead. I really don't know what would happen if she lost her work here."

Biddy Canavan earns one-and-sixpence a week from us for one day's work. She also has a shilling a week as outdoor relief from the Union. That, so far as we can find out, is her whole income, and she lives on it, she and the three small children. I do not know how the thing is done, but plainly it would be much more difficult to do if the one-and-sixpence were taken away from her. I could not press for her dismissal. I smelled the shirt again and felt that some steps must be taken.

"Why not make her go up to the Technical School and learn how to wash?" I said. "Here we are paying enormous sums for the upkeep of the Technical School and we can't get a shirt washed decently."

It appeared that this course had been suggested to Biddy; that she had promised, even pledged herself with oaths, to go to the school and learn the laundress's art. But she had not gone. Week after week the promises had been renewed. Week after week they had been—broken is a wrong word to use. Biddy Canavan does nothing so decisive and definite as to break a promise. Week after week the promises had been neglected. I touched the shirt again and shivered at the disgusting, matted greasiness of it.

"You must put it to her strongly," I said. "Threaten her that you will dismiss her next time you find out that she has not been to the Technical School."

"I wish you'd do it yourself. I really can't do it any more."

"You're afraid of her," I said.

"No, I'm not. If she abused me, or was impudent, or made any sort of excuse I could speak to her, but she simply cowers and looks at me with the eyes of a dog which expects to be beaten. If she speaks at all she says she's very sorry—and I can't, I simply can't, scold her."

"Very well," I said. "I'll speak to her myself to-day. That kind of woman must be shaken up for



her own good. What time does she come here?

"About ten o'clock."

"For the future," I said, "she shall come at six. A day's work ought to begin at six."

There was something said about hot water which I did not distinctly catch.

"Or eight," I said, "Eight, or nine at the latest. Certainly before ten. I'll make that clear to her this morning."

I did speak to Biddy Canavan. I spoke as no man ought to speak to a woman, as I never spoke to a woman before and never intend to speak to one again. I wore the flannel shirt in order to keep my temper up to the boiling point. I writhed in it, and I loosed barbed words at Biddy Canavan. She utterly defeated me. Her eyes were of a peculiarly soft brown colour, very like a red setter's eyes, but much larger, moister and more pathetic. Her face expressed a settled, helpless melancholy, and along with that a sort of trustful and affectionate confidence in me. I came to the conclusion that she regarded me as a kind of Providence; that my decisions might seem severe, but would be accepted as just and altogether right without murmuring. She drooped all over. Her head drooped, her arms drooped. Her attitude reminded me of that particularly contemptible kind of tree called a weeping willow. She had no energy or she would have fought; no self-respect, or she would have resented what I said. At the end of five minutes I felt

inclined to speak more gently. Then I fled from the kitchen. If I had not fled I should have apologised to Biddy Canavan—apologised abjectly and invited her to come and wash in my house two days every week. I should very likely have offered to buy more flannel shirts if it were a real pleasure to her to spoil them. I should have done all this though the fragrance of the abominable garment I was wearing was in my nostrils.

The next day was my birthday. In our household birthdays are high festivals. We lay gifts on the happy individual's plate at breakfast time and we have a large rich cake for tea. When I came downstairs I found the usual number of brown paper parcels, and one over. I had reckoned on a gift from each member of the family. I was puzzled by the extra parcel, which was larger than any of the others and addressed in a strange handwriting. I left it until the last, for several eager donors were waiting to note my appreciation of their gifts. I could not postpone the pleasure which, I hope, my thanks give. I got through them all in time, and came to the strange parcel. It was untidily papered up. Being circular in shape, it must, I know, have been difficult to paper. I remember once trying to wrap up a football, Association shape, in brown paper, on the eve of another birthday, and I could not make it into a tidy parcel. I took this thing up and poised it in my hand. It was heavy. I opened it slowly, and discovered a cake—a par-

ticularly noxious-looking cake. It was the kind of cake which is to be seen displayed in the windows of cheap grocery stores at Christmas time, made, I am told, of margarine and stale eggs—certainly of gritty currants. It had sugar on top, hard, white sugar; and embedded in the sugar was a highly-glazed green holly leaf, made of thin card-board. It must have survived the Christmas trade, lain unnoticed and hidden in some obscure nook, been discovered at a season of spring cleaning or stock-taking. Pinned on to it was a card, a Christmas card, plainly another survival. It bore the inscription:

“For the Master’s birthday, from Biddy Canavan, with kind regards.”

I was staggered.

“I thought,” I said, “that this woman had three starving children. I was certainly told she had.”

I received from the whole family an assurance that the children did exist, had been seen in the flesh, had from time to time been given cast-off garments.

“Then what on earth does she mean by buying a cake like this and giving it to me? Why doesn’t she keep it and feed her babies on it? Or buy something useful for them with the money she spent on it? It must have cost two shillings. Even at a cheap sale you couldn’t get it under one-and-sixpence. Send it back to her at once.”

Then I realised that this course at least was impossible. I had been brutal to Biddy Canavan the

day before. I would not be brutal to her again. My words, words which I still maintain were those of perfectly righteous wrath, came back to me, rose up and smote me, burnt into my flesh like red-hot skewers. I had spoken thus and thus; and Biddy Canavan had spent half a week's income or thereabouts on buying me a cake.

"What," I asked helplessly, "is to be done with a woman like this? She can't work and won't try to. She's utterly inefficient. She can't be helped or improved in any possible way. She's a burden to society, a menace, an actual menace, to the peace of mind of respectable people who wear flannel shirts, and she possesses in the highest degree the distinctive virtues of Christianity. She alone, of all people I have ever met, turns the other cheek to the smiter and deliberately does good to those who despitefully use her. What am I to do with her and her cake?"

It was suggested that the cake should be kept until the summer holidays. It will not be much staler than it is, and we shall have a schoolboy with us then. Also that I, or some one in my place, should take Biddy Canavan by the hand, lead her up to the portals of the Technical School, push her in and stand beside her, uttering words of encouragement while she learns to wash.



## XXV.—THE PRODIGAL

**I**T was Christmas-eve, and the vicar paid, as he always did on that day, a visit to Mrs. Gray. She was the widow of a brother clergyman and lived on an annuity of rather less than £50 a year. She was so cheerful and contented that the vicar, who was much better off and had endured no great sorrow in his life, used to go away from her time after time greatly ashamed of his own habit of grumbling about minor troubles. His conversation with Mrs. Gray always turned on the same subject. They might begin with items of local gossip, touch on the character of the curate, the way in which the latest mother in the parish managed or mismanaged the latest babe, the eccentricities of other people's maid-servants—Mrs. Gray, because of her poverty, escaped the curse of servants—and kindred other topics. But they passed from these very soon and settled down to the one really interesting subject, the doings, rising fortunes, and splendid character of Leonard Gray. He was old Mrs. Gray's only son. The vicar had known him as a boy; but it was ten years since he saw him, ten years since his mother saw him. Leonard used to write occasionally from Canada. He was in a different part of the great Dominion every time he wrote. He

was always doing well and always on the verge of doing better. Every letter held out hopes—indeed, certainties rather than hopes—of a golden fortune in the near future.

Mrs. Gray pulled a chair up to the fire and patted into rotundity a cushion in the seat of it. She poked the fire into a blaze, and did it with an air of hearty willingness, though, as the vicar knew, Mrs. Gray's fires were not poked unnecessarily, coal being exorbitantly dear. Then they settled down to talk. The church organist had lately composed a new tune to a familiar hymn, and insisted on having it sung; but even this appalling iniquity did not hold them long. They passed to Leonard's latest letter. It was two months old, and came from Montreal. The vicar had seen it before, and half hoped there might have been one of later date. It appeared that there was not. He betrayed neither surprise nor disappointment, but fell eagerly to the discussion of Leonard's plan of going into partnership with a friend who owned a fruit farm in British Columbia. It was a very good plan, so they agreed, and old Mrs. Gray flushed with pleasure as she reminded the vicar that Leonard had always enjoyed a country life and found happiness in simple, innocent pursuits.

"It's much better for him," she said, "than railway engineering. I'm glad he's given that up."

Leonard, in his last letter but one, had represented himself as employed in making a new railway. It was Mrs. Gray who had promoted him to

the post of engineer, for which the vicar privately doubted his qualification. Mrs. Gray's knowledge of the details of a fruit farmer's life was small, the vicar's hardly greater; but between them they sketched a most attractive picture. There were groves of golden-fruited orange trees, bright sunshine, a pleasant homestead of the bungalow type in the background, and Leonard, bronzed and superlatively healthy, riding on a grey cob, giving orders to a contented band of fruit-pickers—Chinese, the vicar thought them,—Mrs. Gray inclined to the negro as more picturesque. It took them an hour to complete their survey of Leonard's estate and their reckoning of Leonard's happiness. Then they parted with the usual banal Christmas greeting on the vicar's lips and a gentle reply from Mrs. Gray.

"When God has given me a son like Leonard," she said; "I should be an ungrateful woman if my Christmas were not happy."

The vicar struggled home through the rain along a muddy road, taking half an hour to make the journey; for Mrs. Gray's cottage is at some distance from the Vicarage, and the night falls early and dark on Christmas Eve. He was in a chastened mood, for he was wishing that he, who was supposed to be helping others to be good, were himself half as good as old Mrs. Gray, who preached from no pulpit. He recovered a proper spirit of Christmas self-satisfaction over a cup of tea, and cut, with a sense that he deserved it, a fine and sugary cake. Then he

was told that a man was standing in the hall and wanted to see him. He looked, so the servant said, like a tramp. The vicar rose, fumbled for a sixpence in his pocket. Sixpences ought not to be given to tramps, so the vicar had been assured on the authority of all the wisest people; but it was Christmas Eve, and then somehow the rules of scientific charity seem thin.

The man was a tramp unmistakably, drink-sodden, helpless, according to all probabilities, hopeless. The sixpence would go to the purchase of whisky—straight to that. The vicar held it out without a word. What use were any words? Instead of taking it the man put his hands behind him, dragging as he did so at the pitifully soaked jacket which he wore. The vicar started. The top button of the miserable garment lost its hold of the worn buttonhole. The man's naked chest was exposed. He owned no shirt.

"You don't know me," he said. "Of course you don't; but I'm Leonard Gray."

The vicar opened his mouth to question him.

"You needn't go into it all," said the tramp wearily. "It's just the usual thing."

There was no need to ask what thing.

"But your letters——" stammered the vicar.

"Lies," he said, "every damned word of them."

Then he laughed. "I'd have written oftener only for the price of stamps. The lies themselves were cheap enough."



"But," said the vicar, "why have you come home? How did you get here?"

"In a cattle steamer," he said. "I earned my passage to Liverpool by feeding and beating the wretched beasts—my passage and ten shillings. I got drunk on the ten shillings, and then I tramped it here."

The vicar hardened. The pity went out of him. The story was too disgraceful.

"You should have stayed where you were," he said.

The man pulled up the leg of his trousers without a word, and the vicar turned suddenly sick at the sight of a ghastly sore.

Leonard smiled grimly and laid his hand upon his chest.

"I'm worse inside, I expect," he said. "I knew I was done before I started. This week has pretty well finished me. But I had a fancy to see her again. That's why I came."

The look of hardness did not leave the vicar's face at once. He could not help remembering old Mrs. Gray's happiness. Leonard spoke again defiantly.

"After all," he said, "I've some right to see her. I might have told the truth and cadged. You and she would both have helped me if I had, but I didn't cadge. I lied right on to the bitter end. And I don't ask her to see me. All I want is to see her. I'll clear out to-morrow and get far enough off for

her not to hear about it when I chuck it altogether. You can manage that for me, I suppose."

"Leonard," said the vicar, "God forgive me if I'm doing wrong, though I don't think I am. I'll lie too. I've a decent suit of clothes upstairs, and if the thing's humanly possible I'll groom you into some semblance of respectability before to-morrow morning. You shall see her, and she you, and we'll tell lies for her together. If it has to be a gold mine you've come home to sell, we'll swear to it. Afterwards——"

"It won't be long. A week at the outside will do the trick."

"Leonard," said the vicar, "I'm not sure that it's not blasphemy, but I am sure, or pretty nearly sure, that it's Christianity——. To-morrow's Christmas Day——"

"Is it? I'd forgotten."

"She'll be there, in church, at the Sacrament. If you could—beside her, Leonard."

"You're the parson," he said. "You run that show. If you let me——"

"I'll take the risk," said the vicar. "After all you did lie to her. That's something to the good."

So old Mrs. Gray had a happy Christmas, excitedly happy. The sorrow came afterwards, ten days later. But her heart cherishes the memory of a good son.

## XXVI.—THE FATE OF JOHN GOODENOUGH

**I** THINK very kindly of John Goodenough now that he is gone. He was a man of many virtues. No one was ever more imperturbably good-tempered than John. Neither disappointment nor prolonged ill-luck dimmed the smiles with which he faced life. Insults which would have driven other men into frenzies of passion did not move John in the slightest. He was open-hearted and generous; ever ready, too ready, to extend his hospitality to acquaintances and friends. Life was valuable to John, chiefly, I think, on account of the opportunities it afforded him of doing kind acts to other people. He was full of admiration for the characters and attainments of his friends and had a low opinion, in fact, had no opinion at all, of his own merits. I cannot help feeling sorry that he is dead.

I first met him two years ago when he came to reside in this neighbourhood. He attached himself to me at once and up to the very last showed a warm affection for me which was wholly undeserved. In the end it was this affection which caused his death. He used to meet me every morning, very often going far out of his proper way, in order to secure a chat with me. I changed my habits of life, altered

my accustomed hours for doing things, took strange circuitous routes to places which I wanted to reach in order to avoid John. I sometimes succeeded in avoiding him for a day or two, but he always found me in the end, greeted me with the same cheery smile, and talked to me with the same abundant fluency. He used to invite me to spend long quiet evenings with him in his house, and I spent many.

There was no way of escaping these quiet evenings; for if I said I was engaged on Tuesday he suggested Wednesday. If I told him a lie about Wednesday he went on, with unruffled good-humour, to Thursday. If I succeeded in accounting for Thursday he passed Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and the following Tuesday before me in rapid succession. I seldom got off with less than one "quiet evening" in each week. John had a gramophone at first, and he used to make it hoot at me. When I lost all self-control and expressed my feelings about gramophones in violent language he was deeply pained, and bought a pianola instead. With this abominable instrument he played for me all the most popular tunes from the latest comic operas.

When I cursed these bitterly he sold all the records and bought instead long perforated sheets of classical music. I shall not easily forget the smile of triumph with which he announced that he was going to give me real pleasure by playing "The



Cruiser." My nerves were so ragged that evening that it was not until far on in the second movement that I recognised a ghastly version of the Kreutzer Sonata. John pedalled away through the whole of it, his shoulders rising and falling alternately, his hands busy with little nickel-plated levers, his face wreathed in benignant smiles.

On the other evenings of the week, those on which I professed to have engagements, John usually called on me. He said that he enjoyed a quiet chat before going to bed and regarded it as a high privilege to be allowed to chat with me. After the first few evenings he did all the chatting that was done. I have often sat from half-past ten o'clock until one o'clock or even later in stony silence, listening to John chatting. I tried the plan of giving orders to my servants to refuse admission to John. This was no use. He came round to my window, easily recognisable by the light in it, and tapped with his knuckles until I let him in. I tried telling him that I was very busy, and could not possibly leave off working for a single moment. Then he promised not to disturb me. "I'll just light my pipe," he used to say, "and sit quiet until you've finished." He was always as good as his word. He sat without speaking, motionless, and watched me with an expression of affectionate admiration while I pretended to write. I could not in reality write a single word. No one could write with a

warm douche of unalterable love playing on the small of his back from John's eyes.

I tried the plan of going out for long walks at ten o'clock at night. I chose the remotest and most unlikely places for these pilgrimages, but quite vainly. John had an instinct like a hound's. He used to track me down, and when he found me, uttered shattering platitudes about the beauty of the moon, or the splendour of the velvety darkness, or the glory of the storm, fitting the things he said to the weather conditions which prevailed at the time. I do not know which I disliked more, listening to a rhapsody about the moon when I was shivering with cold, or hearing Kingsley's poem about the north-east wind declaimed when I was crouching under the lee of a wall with my umbrella blown inside out.

Hardly a day passed on which John did not do me some little kindness. He grew early lettuces and brought me one every morning during the season. He found out that I liked cream cheese and bribed a man who deals in such commodities to post me one every week. I mentioned incautiously in his hearing that I was singularly interested in the protest made by the English land-owning classes against the Budget. He subscribed to a press-cutting agency and secured for some months every article and letter which appeared in any paper about Form IV. and the valuation of land. No one would believe the number of them there were. John used to carry

them up to my house every morning in a brown gladstone bag and unpack them in my study with smiles of amazed delight.

The end came early last month. I had spent a quiet evening with John on Tuesday and heard the whole "Cruiser" played through from beginning to end. I hoped, vainly, that I might have had Wednesday evening to myself. I said distinctly that I was expecting a brother to dine with me whom I had not seen for more than twenty years and with whom I had many private affairs to discuss. Yet at nine o'clock John arrived. He reminded me, facetiously, that there was an "r" in September, and then produced a basket containing about fifty oysters. He had gone out in a boat during the afternoon and dredged them up. He sat down opposite me and took out an oyster knife. With it he opened the oysters, laboriously, and handed them one by one to me. I was expected to eat them. John babbled pleasantly all the time. His flow of talk never ceased for an instant, not even when he gashed his hand, as he frequently did, with the oyster knife. At ten o'clock I defiantly refused to eat another oyster. John sat there with his bandaged hands on his knees and talked to me. At eleven o'clock I stopped answering him. At twelve I yawned and continued to yawn until half-past twelve. Then I said I wanted to go to bed. John pleaded for another half-hour. He said that he enjoyed talking

to me more than anything else in the world. At a quarter to two I took the poker, a strong, heavy one, and killed John Goodenough. It was the only thing to do. . . .

I have managed to escape being hanged or even tried, but my conscience sometimes troubles me. Now that he is gone I remember all the good points there were about John.







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